

THE HARDTOWNERS : AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY  
FOCUSED ON A GROUP OF LONG-TERM  
UNEMPLOYED ONE-PARENT FAMILIES LIVING  
WITHIN A DUNDEE COUNCIL ESTATE

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## THE HARDTOWNERS

An ethnographic study focused on a group of long-term unemployed one-parent families living within a Dundee council estate.

*... I live in mighty fear that all the universe will be broken into a thousand fragments in the general ruin, that formless chaos will return and vanquish the gods and men, that the earth and sea will be engulfed by the planets wandering in the heavens ... Of all the generations, it is we who have been chosen to merit this bitter fate, to be crushed by the falling pieces of the broken sky.*

*- Seneca, Thyestes*

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*For the men and women of the Hardtown and for my loving family who have been a great support through this PhD.*

*I dedicate this thesis to the memory of Professor Ladislav Holy, my first supervisor.*

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisor Mark Harris for his commitment and faith in my work. Grateful thanks also to James Kemlo, Estelle Kennely, Anne Outram, Susan Hanna, Joanna Overing and Kenneth Kemlo for their helpful comments, continual support of and belief in me and in this study.

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## **Abstract**

This is an ethnographic description and investigation of life on a Scottish council estate. It is based on five unemployed one-parents' life histories focusing on their experiences, knowledge and emotions in and around a local community centre. The study's expressed focal point is the Gentleman Robber community centre, within the Hardtown community in the city of Dundee.

The study touches on locally important representations and key issues such as: work, morality, boredom, kinship, spatiality and violence.

At the tables in the community centre, the local narrative montage often focused on the enjoyment of violence or the negative marginal stigmatism faced, while, for example, collecting one's social benefits or attending the local doctor. It reflected a dichotomy of Us/Them relations linked to a local fragmentation of identity and issues of deservingness. I found that in a daily emphasis of their own exclusion the Hardtowners often voiced a feeling and embodiment of opposition through local story telling.

It is a fragmented and stressful everyday life, with individual skill and network connections deciding individual status in the community. Links and networks last for as long as they are deemed useful and flexibility in trading, cooperation, networking and violence is one of the local guiding lights for success.

The ethnographic narrative is described though a fragmented, contextually faithful discourse, with cinematic influences. This imparts a slice of daily experientialism found in the fragmented and stressful lives of the individuals born into and living on benefit in a Western European welfare society.

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a study of the multiple fragmentation of identity that is contextually embodied within the individual among the long-term unemployed from a group of one-parent<sup>1</sup> families who frequent daily the Gentleman Robber community centre (GRcc<sup>2</sup>) in the council estate of the Hardtown in Dundee. The main aim of the thesis is to describe and explain the essential inside view from individuals within Hardtown social life through, for example, their use and local interpretation of verbal and physical violence. The focus throughout is on what the Hardtown informants consider and express to be the key features of their local and social behaviour and knowledge.

In addition, this thesis touches on one of the major issues or problems of modern urbanite analysis, namely, the dichotomy of Us versus Them relationships; linked here to the local fragmentation of identity and issues of deservingness<sup>3</sup>. These are topics that often arise from studies of inter-ethnic relations within the city or investigations of the characteristics of marginalized<sup>4</sup> socio-cultural and socio-economic communities.

In the Hardtown informant narratives, I assemble a montage of the life experiences as expressed by the individuals who meet around Diana's table<sup>5</sup> in the GRcc. This montage often focuses on the negative marginal stigmatism they have to face in the everyday world,<sup>6</sup> for example when they collect social benefits or attends the local doctor. In a similar manner to Day's 1994 and 1999 studies on prostitutes, the Hardtown issue of deservingness and the participation in the local informal market seem to have replaced, transformed and recreated a new, local notion of opposition, which seems to scorn the opposing mainstream notions of work, identity, productivity and morality (cf. Day on p 2). Many of the Hardtown informants viewed these latter notions as conflicting with the (self-assumed) autonomy and freedom that their way of life is supposed to have. Paradoxically, this clearly contradicts the (self-professed) lack of freedom that they express on an everyday basis.

<sup>1</sup> I use the terms 'one-parent' and/or single parent depending on context. For example the organisations such as One-parent Families in Scotland and 1+ use the term 'one-parent' whereas the Hardtowners call themselves single parents and refer to their local group a single parent group.

<sup>2</sup> I will subsequently use the abbreviation GRcc for the Gentleman Robber community centre.

<sup>3</sup> As in Howe (1998:1), deservingness is determined by 'a set of moral and evaluative criteria'. Howe focuses on a 'moral community', which excludes a set of undeserving unemployed that become the targets of 'conservative administrations', who frequently 'employ a rhetoric which emphasizes that resources must be "targeted" or "channelled" only to those most in need' (ibid:1-3). This assumes that the category of the undeserving does not have a need and that they therefore should be eliminated after being identified in order to 'husband scarce resources' and to make sure they do not 'demean and stigmatise the service for the deserving' (ibid:3).

<sup>4</sup> The terms 'marginal' and 'marginalized' are not used by most of my informants. For the sake of simplicity I will use them in this study to describe an impoverished group or individual living on the margins of society, as well as to describe the Hardtowners' own expressions for being made to feel inferior to others or at times as excluded outsiders. Some of my informants connected this to poverty and long-term unemployment as well as to others' view of them as *being nothing*. This is something that they assert is imposed on them by outsiders such as their more affluent neighbours and external forces such as doctors and social service staff.

<sup>5</sup> Diana was one of the most influential frequenters of the GRcc and one of my best informants. When allowed by the centre staff, she and her closest friends always claimed the largest table with the most seats as her right.

<sup>6</sup> Hardtown discourse describes and makes salient the use of a series of swear words, verbally abusive stories and violent performances, which outsiders (with links to what Hardtowners view as the mainstream) would classify as having negative connotations. In their terms, this renders them contextually positive and locally valid through a re-evaluation and relocation of their status. It transforms or translocates their local tales into the concept of the 'excluded other' as somehow superior to the mainstream and external forces.

Throughout my fieldwork, I found that many relationships in the community were connected to the informal market and dependent on the market's trading, exchanges and notions of reciprocity. This study proposes that the Hardtowners' life-style is 'certainly, at times', viewed as a 'threat to other, "respectable" ways of life' (Day 1999:2). The ways in which they live and behave are often interpreted by the mainstream<sup>7</sup> as an opposition or rejection.

With a daily emphasis on their own exclusion, the Hardtowners voiced through local storytelling the feeling and embodiment of opposition. For example, they expressed how they used their status as outsiders to manoeuvre, trick or *have* the social service agents, and to *get one up on* mainstream forces by obtaining what they need or want using any means necessary (legal or otherwise). It seems that this dexterity not only offered Hardtown inhabitants a new means of sustenance or economic possibilities, it also comprised for many the binding forces that paradoxically breached and divided their loyalties to family, partners and friends. This simultaneously affected individual and network notions and representations of status, morality, closeness, friendship and the local performance of violence.

The added pressures experienced by the individuals within the Hardtown community from mainstream agents often resulted in a Hardtown expression of irritation and anger. This manifested itself in personalised opposition in the form of verbal conflict and scorn, bitching and baiting these threatening 'outsiders' (see Chapter 6). This interactional opposition conveyed in a continuous, ambiguous and fluid process a partial (individual and temporarily collective) local notion of empowerment<sup>8</sup>, which on a daily basis became an essential part of the local creation and recreation of relationships, closeness and communication. In addition to an internal (relational) distancing and increase in conflict and aggression,<sup>9</sup> I found that this was locally closely linked to the daily individual need for survival, based on individual skills and coping mechanisms.

### The start

In October 1996, towards the end of my first year at St. Andrews University and after discussion with Professor Ladislav Holy, my first supervisor, it was mutually agreed that my research would benefit if I initiated my fieldwork interviews within a regulated and structured environment. We decided that I should concentrate my research on one-parent organisations in different locations, where data collected could easily be compared with each other. My next step was to arrange interviews with informants from two different one-parent organisations in

<sup>7</sup> The term 'mainstream' will be used in this thesis to describe the negative and conflicting contextual opinions expressed by Hardtowners about external forces and institutions such as local doctors, the police, social service agents, community centre staff, benefit agencies, local and central government and the media as powers with notions and values that oppose their own. The Hardtowners feel that these powers try to impose their opinions on them and dominate them by any possible means of coercion.

<sup>8</sup> The temporary, collective feelings of empowerment clashed with the internal and individual power struggles taking place within the Hardtown informal market (as well as between gangs) and created a fragmentation and instability in the community. Paradoxically, this produced diverse possibilities for an internal development and transformation of local notions of power and empowerment within day-to-day life. This was achieved through the provision and division of local and individual means of sustenance, identity, communication and values.

<sup>9</sup> Paradoxically, it may also be suggested that these actions represent and facilitate their physical and emotional disempowerment by the mainstream.

the cities of Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee. At this time, I also moved from St. Andrews to live in the nearby city of Dundee.

I spent the following six months trying to build up a network of possible contacts and informants in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee. With a sinking heart, I was obliged to return to Ladislav and report that, despite a series of meetings, interviews and conversations with a number of individuals and groups in Glasgow and Edinburgh, I only managed to find a few sporadic contacts, none of which were very helpful. While Ladislav was sympathetic about this delay in my schedule, he suggested that I should renew my efforts and keep going to these organisations and meetings in the hope that this situation would change with time.

In the interim and while I concentrated most of my efforts in Glasgow and Edinburgh, I also tried to get in touch with the manageress of the Dundee office of one of the one-parent organisations. After many unsuccessful attempts, I finally managed to track her down and set up an appointment. However, when I met with this very capable woman, she showed a total lack of interest in my research. Determined not to give up, I dropped in unannounced into her office on a Thursday, which I knew was the day for one-parent meetings but also (somewhat surprisingly) the manageress' day off. On this occasion I instead met her assistant Caroline U, a blonde, slim and much more helpful woman. During the day's conversations, she showed a keen interest in my study and invited me to join in the regular Thursday meetings, extending a promise to help in any way she could.

I spent the next few months travelling between Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee. As my association with Caroline continued, I acquired (by participant observation) confirmation of the value of the informant access and information I received from Caroline and her group. After reviewing the data collected from Dundee and with the agreement of my supervisor, I subsequently terminated my work with the Edinburgh and Glasgow one-parent groups. We decided that the Edinburgh and Glasgow sites were too large, too impersonal and too difficult for me to find informants or gain access beyond the initial gatekeepers. My supervisor and I considered that Dundee offered the potential as a fieldwork site for this kind of study because of its smaller size, its history and, not least, the cooperation I had received from Caroline and her one-parent group, who helped me with the initial steps in gaining informant access.

When I attended one-parent meetings with Caroline, I was often asked to help the group members with reading, explaining and filling in questionnaires and forms from the social services. I also lent them a friendly ear and was asked to give advice on every possible kind of problem that the members had. These included, for example, listening to rants about abusive boyfriends, money problems and the boredom, loneliness and isolation they all faced daily. Many expressed a locally widespread feeling of depression. However, I found that, as I was a new face to most of the group members, they preferred chatting either to Caroline or among themselves.

I spent most of my time with Caroline in the Whitfield area of Dundee but also visited several other locations such as Perth Road, Broughty Ferry and Albert Road<sup>10</sup>. Initially, I was

<sup>10</sup> In these areas, I tried to get in touch with the local one-parent organisations and with individual one-parents. The response I received was underwhelming. To try and remedy this I even began working in a Broughty Ferry restaurant, which employed several one-parents, to meet informants outside any organisations or institutions. I also tried visiting the one-parents from Caroline's group in their homes but this technique was also less than successful.



just a participant observer but, after a few months, some of the more locally powerful women in the group gradually began to chat with me on a more intimate and personal level. However, even if the informant situation seemed to have improved, I was still not satisfied that I was reaching and accessing the everyday areas and levels of knowledge that I was interested in studying. All this time, I kept trying to find a suitable venue that would enable daily informant contact and informants willing to consider such an interaction. Unfortunately, I found neither.

This problem of finding an appropriate venue was further emphasised when I realized that it was not local practice for anyone, far less a stranger and a foreigner, to be invited into someone's home<sup>11</sup>. I tried everything, even going out dancing with a group of one-parents considered 'regular stompers'. After spending many evenings dancing, all I ended up with were several unwanted propositions, a loathing of hardcore house music and an aching body. I still felt that my access to the one-parent daily experiences, notions and values was far too limited.

By pure luck, or perhaps through perseverance, my patience was rewarded. Caroline U called me at home unexpectedly, just as I was transcribing my notes from the previous day's interviews. She asked me if I would be interested in accompanying her the next day to a one-parent meeting in one of her 'special' groups on the most violent and impoverished council estate in Dundee: the Hardtown. I had previously shown an interest in this particular council estate during our conversations. Caroline had promised to ask the members of the group if I could attend one of their meetings, but for months nothing had come of this. In fact, I had assumed that Caroline had forgotten her promise or that the group had denied the request.

On the drive up to the Hardtown, Caroline and I talked<sup>12</sup> about Dundee and the people we were about to meet. She gave me a detailed history of the location and the members in her group. Dundee (she said) is a city with a large working class and a long industrial history. In the early history of Dundee, the Hardtown was originally a community for bonnet-makers and small-scale industries but gradually became the living quarters for unskilled manual workers, with a high percentage of long-term unemployed or periodically employed. Today's image of the Hardtown community is an impoverished council estate, with a high percentage of long-term unemployment (cf. Chapter 1).

As we were talking and travelling, I contemplated the changing face of the city. The Blackness area mostly comprises renovated tenement buildings: dark and gloomy at first glance, I know that they are fully renovated inside with double-glazing. Over the last few years, these tenements have had to share the area with new, exclusive flats, built close to the luxurious houses in the Perth Road area. We then drove past the industrial site that stands between the Blackness area and the busy city centre. As we left the shops of the city centre behind us and travelled towards Hardtown, the previous clean and bustling area began to take on a darker and more subdued atmosphere, one with which I would become well acquainted over the next few years (cf. Chapters 1 and 2).

<sup>11</sup> At that time, I naively thought that this was the only place I would regularly meet my informants other than on Thursdays in Caroline's group and during my work hours at the restaurant as a part-time waitress.

<sup>12</sup> She also mentioned that the organisation hoped that I would apply to do some training with them to become a counsellor and work for them helping one-parents in Dundee. Grateful for all her help, I agreed to accept this offer. Unfortunately, I did so without giving her suggestion enough consideration. I later had to abandon my counsellor training as I found out that the Hardtowners viewed counsellors as outsiders and the enemy. To thus continue to train and work too closely with the organisation would greatly hinder my research.

When we arrived in Hardtown, I was still haunted by the dark and impoverished image of the community and found myself taking a deep breath as I followed Caroline out of the car. We walked briskly from the parking lot into the community centre. The thick metal bars and fencing that covered the entryway were pulled slightly apart to allow entry, while still serving as a reminder of its stringent security. The doorway opened into a narrow corridor and, as we passed through, Caroline greeted the woman behind the reinforced security window with a wave of her hand. She then walked quickly up to the corner table close to a pool table and sat down, exchanging greetings with the women sitting around the table. After a few initial comments about the bad weather, she introduced me to the others and explained my presence at the meeting. I was a little confused at first, as I knew that they had already been forewarned of my arrival, but later realised that this face-to-face meeting was an essential part of the local Hardtown etiquette.

After attending the three-hour-long meeting, I knew that this was exactly the venue and the chance that I had been looking for. This location gave me a perfect chance to observe, meet and talk, on a regular and daily basis, with the one-parent group as well as the other frequenters of this community centre, without trying in vain to construct a research context within their individual homes.

I began my study of the Hardtown experience within the one-parent organisation's meetings<sup>13</sup>, during which I received a number of warnings<sup>14</sup> not to spend time with or to ask questions of two of its three groups. It transpired that the centre's staff and other 'outsiders' divided the one-parent group into three status groups, ascribing status and value to these groups according to how well the frequenters interacted with themselves and social service staff. The staff regarded individuals who had difficulties in relating, who seemed to conflict and oppose in behaviour or who dressed in a *schemie* fashion, as non-communicative and therefore less valued - as well as dangerous. However, their three-way division and repeated recommendations to ignore parts of the one-parent group only succeeded in arousing my curiosity. This curiosity subsequently developed into personal reservations and doubts about the staff's three-way status division and of the image that this created on the local Hardtown interactions and divisions. These reservations subsequently led to my decision not to focus my study solely on the one-parent group. Nevertheless, I did need to find a place where I could observe the interactions and divisions made by the GRcc frequenters as well as the relations of the frequenters to the one-parent group (see Chapter 2). For all of these reasons, I decided that the best focus for my investigation was the central table within the GRcc, where one of my main informants, Diana, could always be found holding court.

Between November 1997 and early 2000, I undertook my fieldwork using participant observation in the Hardtown of Dundee. Throughout the last months of 1999, I collected my last statistical data by interviewing the Hardtown sample group.

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<sup>13</sup> As a result of these meetings, I remained in contact with many of the women who subsequently became my main informants. These warnings came mainly from the community centre staff but I was also warned by one of the group members, who was considered an outsider by most of my informants because of her English heritage, opinions and behaviour.

<sup>14</sup> These warnings came mainly from the community centre staff but I was also warned by one of the group members, who was considered an outsider by most of my informants because of her English heritage, opinions and behaviour.

## Problems in Industrial urban studies

The conventional view of anthropological research is that it takes place in a remote village in an undiscovered area but in today's globalised society the opportunities for studies of this kind have become fewer and fewer. Today many anthropologists turn to the fascinating challenge of urban societies. This is an academic area that is widely investigated by authors interested in everything from Thai urbanism to the social networks of British communities.

The magnitude and multiplicity of today's urban and global society give many of us the choice of whether to study people on a 'superficial' macro level or in small numbers of informants in depth<sup>15</sup>. This leaves all of us with the problem of extrapolating from a small-scale study to the whole of a city or a segment of it. To overcome this problem, many analysts have gone down a new path that leads away from more holistic studies and instead involves a more detailed treatment of the urban society.

R. Basham (1978) identified two of the possible routes to take. In the first, holism is exchanged for micro-level ethnography of segmented populations (e.g. Agar's 1973 study of the drug culture in the USA). In the second, modern urban interactional networks have been traced through ethnographic work (e.g. E. Bott's 1971 studies).

However, recognising and understanding the local knowledge and notions of value implies a complex and difficult investigation of the multiplicity of the diverse worlds found within the urban context. In other words, in today's city of multiplicities it is not surprising to find that the problem of 'indexicality'<sup>16</sup> has become a key focus for some anthropologists. Moreover, the construction of a holistic overview or image of such an environment is not only difficult but also probably impossible. Nevertheless, it clarifies the value of considering the complexity of multiplicity and diverse individual world-views or, as in this thesis, the multi-fragmented identities and everyday experiences of five life-history informants.

Another topic that is actively investigated and discussed within urban anthropology is the decline of the social and kinship network. However, analysts such as G. Sjöberg (1960) have refuted the claim of such a decline through multiple research projects done in the areas of pre-industrial and Third World urban communities. Furthermore, as illustrated by my own study of Hardtown kinship networks, many studies in these areas indicate that a decline in kinship networks is often followed by a rise in other types of social networks or processes (see chapter 4). This is in line with Ulf Hannerz's (1980:274) notions of 'fluidity', in which he

<sup>15</sup> For myself the main problem with undertaking urban anthropology was not merely that of informant access. On the contrary, I found that here my main problem was the Hardtown response to outsiders: verbal violence, robbery or physical assaults. These were problems that made my approach to the Hardtowners both a confusing and dangerous enterprise. I found out by experience that the Hardtowners felt that, if you walk into someone else's 'patch', you suffer the consequences. As a result I experienced verbal assaults and was threatened with fights and bottles during my time in the Hardtown. However, most of the time I was largely ignored, which to me at the time felt like the harshest of punishments and violence. It is difficult in the modern, urban, post-industrial field site: we cannot camp out on people's doorsteps waiting to be accepted because we would either be arrested or beaten up (or worse). I found that, as an urban anthropologist, I needed an angle – 'an in' as my informants would put it – and a locale open to all community members where I could meet, talk and observe. I was lucky to stumble on such a locale, perfect for participant observation: the GRcc.

<sup>16</sup> Indexicality here refers to the amount of 'shared background knowledge' needed to be able to understand a message (M. Agar, 1980:5).



considers the 'long-term effect' that careers have on 'network morphology'. In this study, Hannerz proposes that, if an individual moves through several roles or identities, he may:

*"... pick up a great many alters over time. If links do not altogether lapse (and it is clearly an important condition), the ego-centered network in the fluid society will be accumulative; it will increase its range over time."* (Hannerz 1980:274)

Already in 1976, R. Blanton took the urban anthropological discussion further by looking at the problem of the basic definition of the urban city. His conclusion was that the urban phenomenon in relation to its process of development was not a simple one.

Durkheim (1893) initiated the discussion on the distinction of the urban city as an environment with distinctive psychosocial characteristics and he influenced all urban research to come with his 'Division of Labour in Society'. The well-known Chicago school of urban anthropology succeeded him and, in turn, strongly influenced urban anthropologists, such as Redfield in his theory of the folk-urban continuum.

It is interesting that Sjöberg (1960) stressed that a city is ultimately defined by the presence of a literate elite. This is a problematic notion in view of the prevalence of slum dwellings found either in the city or its vicinity. These are often found to house illiterate individuals with no strong connections to educational systems.

Turning to the issue of auto-anthropology and the problem of anthropological exoticism of the western societies; this is a notion encountered when we study, analyse and record changes within our own urban societies (and urbanity within other cultures), where we make the 'exotic familiar and the familiar strange' (Okely 1996:5). In this view, we can no longer consider the geographical distance as relevant and have instead turned to an exoticism of the social, the multiple and the diverse.

In this new main area of anthropological adventure I suggest that, to transcend our modern ethnographic flora of bias, we need to try to remain true to our inner selves – as analysts, advocates for socio-economically-marginalized communities and as individuals. When venturing into the field, we should not overlook R. Burgess's (1982, 1984) warnings about taking the idea or role of the anthropologist in the field lightly and I emphasise the importance of individual ethnographic creativity, investigative skills, imagination, honesty and compassion. It is evident that we should strive to remember the new theoretical paths, which, for example, argue the importance of placing the anthropologist more visually in ethnography or in other new ideas of academic descriptive, emotive, inter-subjective and subjective writing.

Over the last 10-15 years we have seen the development of many new paths within the forum of urban anthropology. New fields of research include play and identities, as analysed by among others B. Kapferer (1972), drug cultures in New York through the life histories of drug users, as studied by M. Agar (1973) and the analysis of manufacturing meaning by P. Jackson (1989 and 1991).

## **Theoretical framework**

While I was attending the GRcc and listening to my informants' daily telling of tall stories and ways of life, I began to define a few key areas that seemed to be of local interest and focus. These topics subsequently became my fields of interest: the internal and external manifestations of multi-sited fragmentation; the local notion of boredom; the performance of violence; and the ambiguous and fluid Hardtown relations.

In the following section, I give a brief description of how various theoretical locations may provide insights into the ethnography of the Hardtown, particularly with regard to its multi-fragmented identities as well as its ethos of violence. However, my intention is not to explain the way in which the ethnographic data may support or undermine a particular anthropological theoretical stance as I feel that such an aim would instead turn the theoretic framework into an excavation of these theories.

One of my principal theoretical influences is Nigel Rapport's conception of notions of individualism, interactionism and the imagined<sup>17</sup>. This provided the foundation that allowed me to consider the complex relationships and imagined (fragmented) Hardtown informant identities. In this way, I was able to imagine the notion of selfhood that seemed connected to the local performance of verbal and physical violence. In this thesis, displays of violence are linked to the Hardtown informal market economy and non-working-class ethics, which in turn are relevant to the Hardtown notions of morality.

The cineaste in me saw in George Marcus' work a concept of auto-anthropology and an essential notion of the literary and cinematographic<sup>18</sup>. I found this akin to the contextual, non-linear, cinematographic fixation in narration of everyday life and it presented me with a starting point from which I could structure the notion of internal Hardtown views and diverse identities. This idea, together with Clifford Geertz' ideas on interpretative thick description, Richard Bauman's concepts of story telling and performance as narrative and my fieldwork data, resulted in the bedrock upon which I drew to describe the Hardtown narrative and story telling. I viewed the Hardtown stories as something that was not (and should not be) based on a single narrative but instead on individual diverse multiplicity.

Elenore Smith-Bowe's (1964), Anna Grimshaw's (1992) and Sophie Day's (1999) ethnographical studies gave further support to the idea of the Hardtown fragmented narrative as I used it here. Their work provided examples of poetic, ethnographic narration as well as a consideration of the anthropological outsider as narrator in the life of the field informant.

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<sup>17</sup> My own interest is in Rapport's (1987) notions of 'talking violence', considering notions of verbal sameness and difference and violence as narrative linked to individual consciousness, imagination and methodological individualism.

<sup>18</sup> In particular I find Marcus' considerations of cinematographic literacy, multiplicity - diversity and the anthropological notion of multi-sitedness of interest to this study.



### *Self and narrative*

I view the anthropological self as one of our most powerful and useful ethnographic resources, since we can use this to understand others' emotions, experience and knowledge. In the field, the ethnographer finds the multiplicity of interpretation of the 'other', as a construction or reconstruction of the self (see Rapport 1997). For example, Cohen (1992:225) defined ethnographic writing as 'an ethnographer-focused art', while Judith Okely (1996:27) advocated a more 'explicit recognition of fieldwork as personal experience instead of sacrificing it to a false notion of scientific objectivity'.

In my view, ethnographic narration with no internal and personal perceptions or a consideration of situatedness may divorce or eviscerate the possibility of reaching much of what we, as social anthropologists, are investigating, particularly with emotions and the reality of everyday informant knowledge and experience. It may, perhaps, lead to 'them and us'<sup>19</sup> situations, divorced from any humanity or substance of individuality and personality.

At the same time, I also urge ethnographers to try to heed Rapport's (1997:20) warnings against the dangers of 'self-delusion' on the part of the ethnographer, based on the giving of 'the visual primacy'. For, by divorcing and closing ourselves from 'the very means and process of our actual (personal) knowledge of and being in the world', we may perhaps come to separate ourselves from the realities of everyday existence (Rapport 1997:20).

Turning to the presence of the anthropologist in the ethnography or in the structure of the ethnographic narrative, I disagree with Okely's (1996:31) suggestion that anthropological narration incorporating the ethnographer often takes on a 'structural unity' as a result of 'the chronology of the stranger's visit'. I found that the interaction between the informants and myself in the field, as well as the structure and fragmented narrative I encountered during my work in the Hardtown, indicated that it was necessary to move beyond such a sequential 'structural unity' (1996:31). This is not least because such a 'structural unity' would merely impose a false sense of order and chronology, thus distorting the perspective of the Hardtown and individual informant narrative, which were fluid and fragmented (ibid:31). In addition I found that, within the local moral economy, many of the Hardtown actors<sup>20</sup> came from many different contexts and narrative standpoints to the common (yet individually expressed) emphasis on the transient, violent and fragmented. They also seemed to express a flowing continuity among the individual, moral, social relations and the many local spheres and the internal multi-fragmented identity.

Keeping the idea of continuity in mind, this combination of the Hardtown informants' life experience and my own introduction to the banality of the violence around our table in the GRcc<sup>21</sup>, became a narration of what Rapport (1997:45) might pithily call a 'meta-experience'. This symbolically creates an order of experience and a 'conscious production of meaning', where the individuals are always creating and re-creating narratives for themselves, their environments and their world-views (ibid:45).

<sup>19</sup> Particularly during data collection and interpretation.

<sup>20</sup> The actors in these power plays were the informants, social service staff, 'outsiders' and myself.

<sup>21</sup> As with other anthropologists, I often stumbled and fell during my fieldwork, misunderstanding things that seemed evident and clear to my informants. If anything, this made me even more aware of my own fallibility and reminded me always to try to remain open to what others' perceptions, notions, knowledge and world-views may teach and divulge, both about themselves and, in particular, my own self.

### Individual - individualism

I begin this section by arguing that Hardtown people create their own local images, where the individual cannot be viewed merely as a manifestation of humanity. This is implied in Geertz's suggestion<sup>22</sup> (1973:52) that 'becoming human is becoming an individual'.

This is particularly relevant as I found that frequenters of the GRcc contextually view many individuals who live in the Hardtown community as less deserving or less human than themselves. These included foreign nationals (particularly those with an English accent but oddly enough excluding this Swede), newcomers and informers for the police and social services. I propose that this should not be viewed simply as a demonstration of collective consciousness, since individuals in Hardtown do not seem to fully adhere to or accept any notion of permanent collective cohesion. For example, the behaviour and social interactions of my five life-history informants show a strong individual consciousness and also indicate that any local notion of collective consciousness and cohesion would have to be temporal and transient. In Hardtown, this collective notion is directly connected to the moment and to personal gain, and is only used in situations where it seems pragmatic and utilitarian. A communal notion was also used externally in conflicts with other communities and in negotiations with external forces and institutions such as aid agencies. Internally, it was used for individual advantage and survival in conflicts as well as in successful trade with others (see Chapter 5).

In addition, this study revealed that the everyday Hardtown trading in the informal market created a need for an individual and personal consciousness that worked in correlation with an ambiguous and multi-fragmented identity. The value and importance of considering the Hardtown notion of the individual informant's personal consciousness is emphasised by Rapport's (1997:62) argument that 'any system of symbols' holds 'a dual phenomenology', with according to Steiner, 'a common surface and a private base' (Steiner 1975:46, 173 cited in Rapport 1997:62). According to Rapport (1997:62) the latter indicates that beneath a public consensual we encounter 'the psyche' together with its, in Steiners phrasing, 'concurrent flow of articulate consciousness' (Steiner 1975:46,173 cited in Rapport 1997:62).

It is the internal and personal life experiences of Hardtown individuals, which compose this thesis and look beyond the impersonal so that I, like Rapport (1997:62-63), can find:

"... those pan-human potentialities, capacities and processes, beginning at birth (if not before) and continuing throughout life, by which 'the world' (cultural categories, images, stories and language; people, interactions, selves and things) becomes endowed, invested, infused, with personal emotion, fantasy, and affect, and so is ever made subjectively, personally, individually meaningful. It is these psychological processes of sense-making, of interpretation, which are responsible for shaping and constituting human life and society, for creating and recreating culture as a meaningful phenomenon in the life of each individual." (Rapport 1997:62-63)

<sup>22</sup> This thought merits attention considering that a multitude of moral, social, philosophical and economic factors are used to determine what a society or group defines as human. It is very common to find powerful groups in a society believing themselves to be more human than a less powerful group of 'others' within that society, using some of the above-mentioned factors to emphasise the excluded others' lack of worthiness. In this study, I find that the Hardtown community does this in two ways by figuratively holding up a mirror to normative society and by looking down on 'others' within their own community.

In the light of Rapport's terms of performance<sup>23</sup>, the power play within the Hardtown (e.g. in the informal market) could be considered as a tool to express individuality, while at the same time also demonstrating a transient sense and knowledge of the collective.

This study proposes that the Hardtowners' intrinsic values and ideas are expressed within the daily Hardtown performance or play of verbal and physical violence. Moreover, I suggest that internal individual relationships are manifested in the performance of violence and the local continuous power play. I found that the Hardtown relationship structures (e.g. trading, sex, family and social networks) are transient and mainly pragmatic in orientation. In addition to simultaneously dividing and bridging between local individuals and factions, the Hardtowners' relationships are recreated in the present moment (see Chapters 4, 5 and six).

In Rapport's (1997:108) notion<sup>24</sup> that 'culture is rooted in, based in, develops from, pure forms of play', I found support for my use of local notions of play and performance as an ethnographic interpretative narrative. This performance narrative illustrated Hardtown 'control, gamesmanship, beauty, evil, hierarchy, logic, illogic, multiplicity, and so on' (ibid: 108). It also created a consideration of the Hardtown individuals' world-views as things of the imagination or the imagined *yet none the less real*<sup>25</sup> for all that (ibid: 108). Moreover I found that the Hardtown relationships were forms of play and performance that were often 'characterised by tension' (ibid: 108). This tension was viewed contextually as both positive<sup>26</sup> and negative performances, sprung from real and imaginary conflicts, of both verbal and a physical nature, that were created for effect, gain and entertainment. In their notions of play, the Hardtowners expressed violence and tension within the illogically logical framework of gaining control by losing control. Their performances showed the presence of intrinsic links with dichotomised and violent power play, individual skill and local relationships (cf. Chapter 6). These links indicated the presence of a personal narrative of games, which erected and transformed the Hardtown values and notions as well as the individual self.

### Imagined – imagination

My ethnography concerns the notion of an imagined multi-sitedness, which works in correlation with the notion of individual Hardtown informant multi-fragmented identities. The notion of the imagined in the Hardtown narrative bears a resemblance to Rapport's (1997:33) definition of the 'imagination', which he viewed as one of the keys to a narration of human life and existence. It is a consideration linked to the key resource in individual consciousness, in which humans are continuously engaged in a creation and re-creation of their 'essence of being' (ibid: 33).

In the first place, I suggest that local notions, such as the Hardtown performance of violence, can be compared to Rapport's (1997:34) notion of 'imagination', especially with

<sup>23</sup> Rapport argues that in '... playing dominoes can be found an inscribing, a writing, of a narrative which concerns home, morality, individual self, and which entails a meaningful commentary on an everyday world thereby transcended' (1993:106).

<sup>24</sup> Derived from Huizinga's (1980: *passim*) ideas.

<sup>25</sup> My italics.

<sup>26</sup> The present study found that most Hardtown relationships were not, and could not, be merely 'characterised by tension' in a negative format (Rapport 1997:108). In particular, some manifestations of violence and tension were locally considered as a positive performance of joy, friendship, closeness and laughter (see Chapter 6).



regard to the continual creation and recreation of self. In the second place, I point out that the Hardtowners' imagination and fluid morality were key features of the local re-creation of self. In addition, GRcc staff and other outsiders might consider the Hardtowners' daily use of fluid morality and violence as 'gratuitous'<sup>27</sup> activities (ibid: 34). However, these local processes offered a temporary transcendental freedom for the Hardtowners from, for example, contextual notions of mainstream conformity. By way of illustration, I found that my Hardtown informants' fluid morality and multiple self-narrative replaced past notions of guilt and debt or mainstream notions of moral = good: immoral = evil.

The above theory, combined with the locally emerging notions and ideas on violence, influenced my narration, interpretation and description of contextual notions of morality and immorality within the Hardtown. This encapsulated the individual's internal movement from conforming to moral-political state marginalizing rhetoric<sup>28</sup> towards a personal, imagined, multiple identity and self-consciousness. For example, I found that the everyday notion of individual fragmentation is highly interconnected to the Hardtown community's conflicting spatial and moral identities (cf. Chapters 2, 4 and 6).

In my view, it is exactly from this state of continual flux of knowledge<sup>29</sup> that the imagined of the fragmented personal and local identity emerges. Together with the continual relationship between the internal and external dichotomy in everyday survival, this is of key social significance in Hardtown.

I propose that the Hardtowners' internal, individual, fragmented multi-sitedness is not only dependent on a consciousness of self but also on an active knowledge and participation in the fragmented and ever-changing continuum by, for example, a display of boredom (cf. Chapter 3). Paradoxically, this even applies in the violence found in the Hardtown day-to-day relations, processes and re-creations. This seems to be necessary, not only for the creation of an identity of self in this social and moral environment, but also for the individual's everyday survival and enjoyment, as illustrated in my thesis (cf. Chapter 6).

From the beginning, I found that my informants' narratives expressed paradoxical feelings of tension and boredom. Their daily tales often dealt with the insensitive treatment they received from mainstream agents, while simultaneously expressing a feeling of being badgered by fragmented world-views and a personal lack of power. These sentiments later came to illustrate a social situation and everyday environment which repeatedly created and re-created situational feelings of no-escape for the Hardtowners. This situation was expressed constantly through the fragmented writing within my thesis, and which Michael Jackson (1989:33) defined as the 'the ambiguity at the heart of all social existence'.

<sup>27</sup> Rapport (1997:34) defined the gratuitousness of 'imagination' as something that was 'seemingly uncalled for in terms of existent reality: unjustifiable, without reason, ground or proof'.

<sup>28</sup> Not merely, as suggested, a homogeneous creation from the internal to the external, but also a creation from the external to the internal, via for example coercion, moral-financial scape-goating and dichotomisation (Parkin; 1984; Clifford 1986; etc). As a separate process, yet linked through a continuity of the internal fragmented consciousness.

<sup>29</sup> The Hardtowners exist within a flux of knowledge in today's ways of life, which in paraphrasing James Clifford (1986:22) are constantly moving while they 'increasingly influence, dominate, parody, translate and subvert one another'.

### Affiliations

Z. Bauman (1992:114) viewed 'the faculty of imagination' as the means of creating membership of a community. I propose that we consider the possibility that, in the Hardtown, it can also become necessary to have an association or affiliation with a multiple membership. In other words there may be a need to have and develop a fluid individual identity in continual fragmentation and flux, thus creating what I, in the notion of ethnographic contextualisation, call 'identification metamorphosis'.

Ulf Hannerz's (1980:274) notions of 'fluidity' considered the 'long-term effect' that (legitimate) careers had on 'network morphology', while I consider the short-term or current effect that (illegal) careers have on identity metamorphosis. This suggests that, if an individual moves through several roles or identities, he/she may:

*"... pick up a great many alters over time. If links do not altogether lapse (and it is clearly an important condition), the ego-centered network in the fluid society will be accumulative; it will increase its range over time. Friendship developed out of some other relationship, we noted at one point before, may remain after that other link is broken."*  
(Hannerz 1980:274)

However, in Hardtown networks, I observed that this fluidity might be accumulative, albeit temporary. It only existed for that particular moment and (temporarily) used, created and transgressed between different networks almost simultaneously.

Moreover, I found that everyday survival and acceptance of individuals in this rapidly changing community<sup>30</sup> were achieved through this continuous identification metamorphosis. The Hardtowners' (multiple) fragmented and ambiguous notions of individual and collective identity as well as knowledge are in this way internally created and re-created. For instance, Hardtown individual and network skills in negotiations and transformations were also a local means of gaining status (cf. Chapter 6). This was also the case in the ever-changing trading environment of the informal market, where a change of identity and affiliation was of vital importance for participation and success. This notion is supported by Parkin's (1984:348) idea that:

*"... no relationship remains equal for more than an instant, and reciprocal imbalance and normative asymmetry provide the differences which motivate human behaviour. It would, however, be a barren reductionism which insisted that these political underpinnings should provide the starting point and conclusion of such analyses..."* Parkin (1984:348)

The Hardtowners expressed that inequality and ever-changing conflict were the focus and foundation of their behaviour. I thus oppose any view that would consider the pragmatic use of their everyday inequality, conflict and marginality merely as barren reductionism that should be disregarded in anthropological analysis simply because inequality exists to some degree everywhere around us. In my opinion, it is important that we anthropologists recognise and accept (and include in our analysis) what our informants believe to be important and vital for their survival. This is true even if this happens to be a local utilitarian use of inequality or marginality; and if the daily survival of a faction depends on it's skill in using an outsider's perceptions of it's inequality and marginality against these same outsiders.

<sup>30</sup> A community whose imagined and real boundaries were in a state of constant flux.

Hardtowners adapted their identities according to the temporary affiliations they need, for example, during a specific deal. They did this through the application of the daily creative common sense they called 'street knowledge'. Moreover, 'what you do' in the present was a key feature of the Hardtowners' definitions and descriptions of self (Day, Papataxiarchis & Stewart 1999:2). However, they also placed great importance on using their shifting notions of self in relation to the world around them.

Furthermore, many Hardtowners considered external institutions, their agents and their controlling social processes as part of the state, and not merely 'tainted by their association by the state' (1999:2). The Hardtowners' swiftly changing affiliations, their opposition and their use of local norms of social control against outsiders 'associated with the long term', suggest that they always tried to resist external classification and control (ibid: 2). It is important to bear this expressed resistance in mind in connection with the external control of and negative views about Hardtown violence. This is particularly relevant to my discussion of the key role that violence plays in Hardtown daily life and informant access to commodities (see Chapters 5 and 6).

### Hardtown contradictions

In the Hardtowners' social world, I encountered the recognition and acknowledgment of a notion of continuous contradiction. This notion seems analogous to Isaiah Berlin's notion of the contradictory and incompatibility in social environments (cited in Rapport 1997:93-105). The behaviour of many Hardtowners reflected this contradiction: my informant Jane's paradoxical behaviour often suggested that her feeling of self and temporary identities came to life and existed through others aggressions against her or that she was who she was despite others attacks or attempts to change her.

Moreover, the unfamiliar Hardtown manifestations of power struggles, such as the local enjoyment, entertainment and temporary affirmations of identity expressed through the play and performance of violence, may 'contradict our own and in our terms may seem self-contradictory' (Rapport & Overing 2000:80) (cf. Chapter 6). I nevertheless propose that these local manifestations should not be disregarded or rationalised as mere poetic illustration and neither should they be considered as a mere depiction of 'figurative or analogic or metaphoric thinking' (ibid: 80).

Furthermore, a very common topic of discussion among Hardtowners was the local avoidance of outside social processes and values, regularly regarded as state-induced control practices. The outside-normal notions and values were not just disagreed with, but often also opposed and re-created. I found that the Hardtowners used physical and verbal violence as an effective tool with which they opposed and contradicted the controlling, coercive notions and threatening behaviour of external and internal forces in their daily lives<sup>31</sup> (cf. Chapters 4, 5 and 6, with particular reference to the treatment they received during social service visits).

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<sup>31</sup> I found that the performance of violence was a powerful Hardtown tool that created opposing contextual notions and expressions of self.

In addition, the negative emphasis placed on physical and verbal violence in the moral discourse of outside forces (e.g. the state's institutions and agents<sup>32</sup>) further seemed to focus much of the Hardtowners' behaviour and discussions on the performance of violence<sup>33</sup>. This includes the 'stereotypical' traditional views held by 'outsiders' of the marginal community (cf. Chapter 6). These external institutions and agents were locally expressed to be the enemy, which was often opposed through 'an alternative mode of defining identity' (Astuti in Day, Papataxiarchis & Stewart 1999:9). In this case, it was a multi-fragmented local mode of identity, where violent and shifting creation determined what Hardtowners were and become 'what they do in the present' (ibid: 9). In most Hardtowners' lives, the present is linked to the internal informal market, individual isolation and fear of internal and external threats. In the Hardtown, this means that you are many different things to many different individuals.

### *Multi-sited ethnographic realism and cinematographic style*

I propose that the Hardtown notion of diverse and continually changing identities is not simply the 'imagined' literal-sitedness, as suggested by Marcus (1998, 1994). On the contrary, I encountered an internal, imaginary, multi-sitedness that was used to negotiate between inner 'imagined' multi-fragmented notions of the individual self. This negotiation was conducted through and dependent on the giving of gifts, the performance of violence and trading with potential associates and allies. I therefore propose that this was an external and complex manifestation of the individual internal fragmentation of the Hardtowners' identities, lives and world-views. These were demonstrations of their own fragmented existence within the Hardtown and represented a narrative realism, which Marcus & Fisher (1986:23-25) stated 'is a mode of writing that seeks to represent the reality of a whole world or form of life'. In following this notion of realism, my study focuses on the inclusion of a locally adapted and non-conventional notion of holism<sup>34</sup> in the form of cultural juxtapositions, creating a notion of multi-sitedness.

Marcus (1994) focused on the medium of film as narration<sup>35</sup> and briefly mentioned the cinematic style. I believe that I can give an equally faithful depiction and interpretation of the Hardtown everyday experience and narrative using this cinematic style and non-chronological sequence of events. More specifically, the style I use is created from an assembled fragmented mosaic of non-chronological life histories and everyday experiences, which are collected into a whole picture depicting the Hardtowners' diverse, conflicting, disjointed and inflamed ways of life. I believe that this facilitates a more acute sensitivity 'to the ambivalence, irony, and

<sup>32</sup> The Hardtowners considered the police, social service staff, community centre staff and doctors as agents of the state. They felt that these agents exercised restrictive social processes and were part of the state's controlling institutions.

<sup>33</sup> Violence was a key feature of Hardtown life. It was primarily used to gain power but was also used as a means of communication, identification and as part of the local notion of conflict and togetherness. Paradoxically, the local performance of violence simultaneously opened-closed and united-separated the Hardtowners' networks.

<sup>34</sup> I consider that the notion of multi-fragmentation is linked to the imaginary multi-sitedness. I use it in this thesis as a narrative and analytical tool for the complex Hardtown fragmented identities and their use as a local stratagem: a Hardtown counterpoint. This is inspired by Nigel Rapport's (1997) notions of multi-vocality, combined with G Marcus's (1994, 1998) notions of the need of a multi-sited social narrative.

<sup>35</sup> I concur with Marcus's (1994) notion that ethnographic films (cinematographic style in this case) give inherent narration a close approximation to the informants' actual stories. This contrasts with written works, which often assimilate and classify. Marcus conveys this idea by using Robert Thornton's commentary on the shortcomings of the classic ethnographic writing, in which he states that classic ethnography does not create a 'sense of the real' or 'a sense of totality' via 'narrative techniques', but instead uses classification (1994:38).



contradictions in which values, and the opportunities for their realization, find expression in the everyday life of diverse social context' (Marcus & Fischer 1986:167). I therefore propose that the cinematographic style should be considered as a valid and real everyday ethnographic medium of narration, description, imagination and investigation as it combines the notion of the 'imagined' with a local individual form of non-chronological montage. More specifically, I use the cinematographic story-style, pioneered by Quentin Tarantino, as the basis for the narrative structure of my thesis (cf. the validation for fragmented writing in Appendix 1). I also use a graphic consideration based on refraction and situational problems, incorporated into the structure of this cinematographic-style visual montage. This allows for the visual presence of local and individual dichotomy, violence and fragmentation found in the 'real' Hardtown narratives.

### Ambiguity

In considering and narrating the Hardtown informants' violent and indefinite life experiences and views, I suggest that we should not lose knowledge that might be found in the ambiguities within their own culture. I agree with Okely that 'any segment of experience, any people, any portion of the globe, should be open to anthropology's poetic sensibility and graphic scrutiny'; it should be made vivid by being sensitive to the minutiae of the context (1996:17).

It is important here, not only to recognize the ambiguity of the violence, fragmentation and dichotomy of Hardtown social relations and processes, but also to acknowledge its value and social meaning. In addition, I found that local recognition of this 'ambiguity' was vital for the survival of individual Hardtowners within everyday violent confusion and boredom. This can be seen as an expression of the social reality made necessary within a socio-economical marginal community constructed upon a shifting morality.

I also propose consideration of Marcus' ideas<sup>36</sup> of multi-locality and the cinematographic style (1994:40) with Rapport's concept of individuality and multi-vocality (1987, 1997) as a viable means of origin for the description and interpretation of urban, multi-vocal, individual, fragmented, separate, simultaneous and non-linear life-history worlds.

Marcus (1994) proposed the concept of dialogic-multiplicity in contrast to the idea that globalisation reduced our world more or less to a single cultural and social construct, and that:

*"... The world in a cultural or humanistic sense is not becoming "one", although it might be becoming more dialogic. Rather, difference, diversity, is generated not from the integrity and authenticity of the local community, rooted in tradition, resisting and accommodating a modern world system every more powerful in its force, but paradoxically from the very conditions of globalizing change themselves" (Marcus 1994:42).*

My Hardtown ethnography indicates that it is more in the intrinsic paradoxical nature of the tension and its inherent ambiguity, that I am likely to discover our local answer. The

<sup>36</sup> The cinematographic, disjointed and confused imagery I suggest for the nature of the Hardtown social realism does partly, like Marcus's (1994:40) research, consider the urban 'deterritorialized nature of the cultural process'. It also views its effect on ethnographic narration, in film or writing, while searching for a means of interpretation and description, which Marcus considered embraces the 'transcultural space' of multi-locality 'in parallel, separate, but simultaneous worlds' (ibid: 40).



differences and diversity I found were generated within the context of the local community. However, since this local community is part of the global community, I suggest that global change affects local conditions for Hardtown and all communities. The complexity, diversity and multiplicity I found in Hardtown as well as their possibilities for change are generated in the here and now. I therefore propose that they are inter-related and inter-dependent.

In the Hardtown, I found that difference, diversity and changeability were considered as positive notions as well as locally necessary for survival in this very violent, day-by-day existence. To paraphrase my informants, cohesion was merely a social punishment. It was also a limitation that my informants thought others used to suggest what they by comparison lacked. Many Hardtowners also believed that it restricted individual access to commodities through social conditioning.

On one hand, the state's moral-political stigmatisation brands the poor one-parent as standing apart from the community and lacking in social cohesion. On the other hand, my informants used this negative image in their everyday negotiations with social service staff to *earn their giro-wage*<sup>37</sup> and they viewed it as an acceptable and pragmatic method of *getting what you are owed*. By embracing this image of themselves, which is deemed as negative by 'outside' forces, the Hardtown individuals transformed themselves into tools for their own survival. In this spirit, I recognise and accept their perceived lack of cohesion as a possible means of resistance as well as a means of gaining access to commodities, and not as a result of 'the very conditions of globalizing change themselves' (Marcus 1994:42).

### Violence as narrative and common sense

The Hardtown *wido*<sup>38</sup> or 'wide-boy' (of either sex) used verbal and physical violence in the form of an entertainment (play and performance) and the 'bitchy joking' took place within the GRcc's day-to-day narrative and cognition. This violent, joking narrative often included everyday Hardtown street knowledge, similar to Geertz' (1973:91) consideration of the 'commonsensical voice', which turned to the identification of 'natural' things. Geertz (1973) suggested that this often took the form of jokes or proverbs, similar to the Hardtown bitching and *widoing*, which were often viewed as juxtaposed between a possible contradictory nature and a commonsense wisdom<sup>39</sup>.

This was a local construction of street wisdom, determined both by its embodiment of the ongoing power struggles and the ordinary Hardtowners' need for access to ever-changing street knowledge. This concept of knowledge was very ambiguous in its rapid changes and adept Hardtowners weighed it up and defined it moment by moment. It is important to note that Hardtown *widoing* was not automatically understandable or accessible to all. I found that Hardtowners gained access to and an understanding of this local knowledge by fulfilling a

<sup>37</sup> 'Giro-wage' is a colloquial Hardtown term for being on benefit, usually with long-term implications. They call it a 'wage' because many view it as a job or hard chore to scam the social services. Some of my informants also said that 'being on the dole had turned into a job' as this made others in employment feel better about themselves.

<sup>38</sup> *Wido* is a slang Dundee term, derived from 'wide-boy', which means to bitch about someone to their face: it usually involves an exchange of insults between two or more individuals in a direct face-to-face encounter.

<sup>39</sup> Geertz' (1973) idea is that, within a specific milieu, common sense is complemented with some specialist form of knowledge, such as religion or science. In the Hardtown, the important specialist knowledge required is likely to involve, for example, the rights of the individual within the social service system.

number of criteria: locality, affiliation, skill and active participation in *widoing* (cf. Chapters 5 and 6).

My gradual awareness and interpretation of Hardtown street knowledge was of key importance for my understanding of the Hardtown's informal market structure. In this thesis, the informal marketplace is depicted through the life-history narratives of five informants and as a manifestation of diverse individuals living in and using the moment. This results in the creation, negotiation and transformation of local notions of relationships, cooperation and identities as well as morality. The importance of '*being in the ken*' and telling tall stories, while violently joking around was emphasised by most Hardtown informants. It also played a part in allowing individuals access to commodities through the informal market.

I found that Hardtowners opened up more local networks and gained better access to commodities within the informal market if they were more skilful in the local performance of verbal and physical violence. These kinds of violent behaviour were also considered as a form of entertainment and were often used to dispel everyday boredom (cf. Chapter 3).

I consider that Richard Bauman's (1986) use of the joke, joker and the trickster within the culture of dog-track-racing places a similar emphasis on the oral narration-story and the performance as much as on the event. The Hardtown joking-violence and tall stories, through which individuals can communicate in manifestations of shared individual fragmentation of identity, multiplicity and diversity, were similarly juxtaposed against a notion of togetherness encountered within the joking exchange of voicing and displaying violence.

Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer (1974:7) proposed that, in this kind of composition and organisation, the starting point was the diversity of the 'speech community'. This was determined by and in negotiation with the shared or mutually interconnected members' wisdom or capacity for an engendering and rendition of the suitable group language. In the Hardtown, this continually re-created and fragmented itself – much as the Hardtown individual did for him/her notion of self.

Like Bauman and Sherzer (1974:7), I believe that goal orientation should be viewed as 'strategies, to be studied with reference to the goals<sup>40</sup> of the participants'. As in the case of the performance of joking violence, I found that the 'goals, in turn, were closely related to values' such as the adaptable and fluctuating Hardtown morality (ibid: 7). The Hardtown goal orientation of potential and temporary contextual norms, values or notions was expressed by my main informants as a wish to give their children what other children have and not just to accept the reality. In effect, they were only trying to keep their family from going under: *ken, ye wanna be able to gi ye kids wha di others ha, but in the end mate, what ye really try for is to keep yer hid over wa'er, like*. Many of my informants therefore found their goals being directed by illegal activities, working and trading within the local informal market. I found that they, as individuals, held a highly flexible moral view that was necessary for survival in an adaptable life in the present while acquiring everyday sustenance.

I also propose that the diverse Hardtown tall-tales, the gossip and the joking verbal and physical violence<sup>41</sup>, which were told and retold around the tables at the GRcc, provided another

<sup>40</sup> These goals included everyday survival, access to commodity networks of trade, entertainment and temporary feelings of togetherness.

<sup>41</sup> The telling of these tales and display of violence were often used to outwit 'outsiders' and create temporary relationships for trading with other individuals within the informal market.

function. The diverse and disjointed highly unstable notions of identity encountered locally<sup>42</sup> can be seen as a way of linking the external knowledge of actions and events to the internal Hardtown relationship envisioned by individual imaginations (cf. Chapter 6).

### **British ethnographies**

One of the first analogous ethnographic accounts I came across was Leo Howe's study (1990) of the unemployed in Northern Ireland. In contrast to my unstructured 'hanging out', Howe based his study on a number of structured interviews and a comparative investigation of the opinions encountered at two sites, which were linked by religion. I found his study interesting and instructive, in particular regarding his approach to fieldwork; the informants' reactions to him; his interview techniques; and the field milieu, which contrasted with my own. However, I found it was impossible to reach a satisfactory depth or intimacy using his highly controlled and classificatory techniques in my study, as I was more concerned with the fluidity and fragmentation of local notions and identities.

In contrast with Howe (1990), my own study is less auto-anthropologically based. He was born and raised in the same country and milieu in which he studied. I was born and raised in Sweden and came from a different socio-economic background than my informants in the Hardtown of Dundee. My study in depth of the everyday experiences of five informants also has a completely different focus from Howe's.

Sophie Day (1994, 1999) considered the 'excluded other' among us in her study of London prostitutes and their individualism. She discussed the notion of prostitution as a main occupation, which seemed to take the form of a somewhat structured business environment. at the other end of Britain in Hardtown, I instead encountered a notion of work that was very unstable and dependent on an illegal business environment; it was unstructured but fluid and ambiguous in order to satisfy the Hardtowners' need for adaptability.

The contextual notions of work that were expressed as contradictory to the 'straight work' found in Day's study nevertheless drew on the similar idea of 'the mindless drudgery' of ordinary jobs as I found in the Hardtown. In like manner, they were both linked to a local informal market, very similar to the one I encountered in the Hardtown. However, instead of the dual and 'divided self', which Day proposed in her study, I encountered in Hardtown an overarching multi-fragmentation of self.

Many Hardtowners viewed themselves as rejected and excluded by society and its institutions. However, the daily lives of my Hardtown informants seemed to differ from the everyday experiences of Day's prostitute informants. In particular, the Hardtowners did not strive as hard as the prostitutes did to embody the society from which they were excluded by the attempt to reify it.

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<sup>42</sup> As Rapport (1997:65) I feel that it is important to take into account 'the commensurate interest in the relationship between movement and identity' which he suggests binds together a consideration of social life and a consideration of 'story-telling'. This as I found that the telling of tall-tales visualised the Hardtown individuals' movement between diverse identities and their knowledge of local and external actions.



Claire E. Alexander's (2000) study of an Asian gang incorporated very interesting explorations in auto-anthropology. She also considered notions such as strange hood<sup>43</sup>. However, her study seems to have drawn overmuch on 'exoticism' within our western post-industrial communities. Her focus was on the Asian gangs and not just on the Asian youths within the community centre, where she worked as a counsellor. She seems to be courting her audience with two of the more popular images within urban ethnography: the exotic gang, and the exoticism of ethnic minorities.

Like my own study, Alexander's (2000) study focused on a community centre. However, instead of considering what was actually going on around her or describing the experiences of others, she went the extra step and became part of the staff of the community centre, working as a youth counsellor. From an ethnographic viewpoint, I personally found that this step was very problematic. For a short period, I worked as a trainee counsellor in Hardtown and was obliged to deal with silence, aggressive behaviour, and other problems<sup>44</sup> from the frequenters of the GRcc. I later found out from these same frequenters, many whom now were close confidants, that this was because I was considered to have chosen to ally myself with a group that was seen as 'outsiders'. The GRcc staff was often viewed as the local enemy as some had been known to inform the police of Hardtown inhabitants' actions.

Finally, the important difference between my thesis and the above-mentioned studies is my use of a cinematographic style of narration. This narrative form is loosely based on the non-chronological and fragmented structure encountered within the oral telling of tall tales and the performance of violence within Hardtown.

### Methodology

I began my initial fieldwork by undertaking structured and unstructured interviews at a number of different sites, making the usual mistake of handing out questionnaires and expecting a reasonable amount of replies. Most of the one-parents who received these questionnaires and whom I tried to interview did not understand the questions, even after I enlisted the help of several local one-parent group workers to simplify the questions. By the time I had eventually started fieldwork within the GRcc, I had learned this lesson and decided not to use any structured interviews or questionnaires<sup>45</sup>.

The main methodology used for this thesis is anthropological participant observation, or what in colloquial Hardtown terminology is viewed as, *Hanging ut, wie yer mates! Dooin*

<sup>43</sup> Claire Alexander is of Asian origin but was adopted into a white family and had no extensive experience of her Asian background.

<sup>44</sup> I was thus effectively barred from access to everyday experiences, gossip and actions within the community and separated from participation in the reciprocal networks within the informal market.

<sup>45</sup> The structure and context of my study were highly dependent on the ambiguous, fluid and multi-fragmented state of the context and its processes, in which I obtained my information. I did not use formal interviews or interview questions more than occasionally, until the end of my fieldwork period when my informants showed an increased willingness to patiently explain 'the obvious' street knowledge, which for them did not need explaining. Even at this late stage, such familiarity remained a highly dangerous situation that only worked with a few limited informants and situations. As such, the ethnographic narratives in this thesis can be considered as contextual expressions. However, I do not view them as less reliable, real or truthful as the context in which they were obtained was just as interesting, valuable and important as the answers received.

*no 'hin much like just si''in aboot!* In practical terms, this meant waiting attentively, keeping my ears open and my mouth shut.

I began to 'hang out' with the one-parent group that met every Thursday at the GRcc, and soon became aware of stratifications imposed by centre leaders, which divided the group into three subcategories (cf. Introduction). However, I discovered that the one-parent group had its own local stratifications and found that I could observe more freely and reach a better understanding with more individuals when I was gradually allowed access into this stratum. Within the community centre, this was manifested in a spatial division that placed certain individuals at certain tables, with different degrees of prestigious status (see Chapter 2).

My five main informants were Diana, Darla, Jane, Sandra and Hamish. While hanging out with Diana (one of the Hardtown's most powerful women) and her court<sup>46</sup>, I observed, talked, discussed, questioned and thus slowly got to know them and subsequently became aware of their networks, links and relationships (cf. my access and fostering pp 23-25).

In the beginning, my informants considered me as a child within the Hardtown community. They felt I had even less 'intelligence' and street knowledge than most of the young children around Diana's table. I did not know when to talk, when to be quiet or how to talk (ibid:23-25). Neither did I know how to access the local means of sustenance, the collective sharing of large cheap pots of tea at the GRcc.

I took part in an everyday experience that was somewhat more 'prosaic' than I had first expected when I began my fieldwork. I waited, quietly observing every move and action of the other frequenters of the community centre. I expected at any second to have my quiet observational stance and humble participation broken by an unexpected, shocking, unusual and surprising development. Strangely enough, even regarding the performance of verbal and physical violence, I was struck by the normality and even the boredom of a continuous everyday sameness. I felt that what the other frequenters did on a daily basis seemed normal and necessary, and I was completely inexperienced in the processes of this environment and the reasonability of their social and productive behaviour. I could not, and did not, attempt to make any kind of judgement at the time (nor have I later) but I did find that most local notions of 'work' were done with a minimum of effort. However I found that some social interactions did seem to be undertaken with a certain formal air. These included trading, gift giving in connection with pregnancies, and the performance of verbal and physical violence (cf. Chapters 4, 5 and 6).

In Hardtown, I found that most individuals did not venture far outside their own community borders and certainly not past the city limits. Consequently, my arrival from another country seemed to emphasise my 'exoticism' and value as entertainment within the community. Of special interest and amusement was the fact that I came from a country where the fraternity<sup>47</sup> of working individuals and the work ethic<sup>48</sup> transgressed the limits of its own cities, even its national boundaries.

<sup>46</sup> Other than Diana's immediate 'inner circle', many others moved and traded within her power periphery.

<sup>47</sup> Weber (1958) challenged Marx's view that infrastructures were the main generators of social change, suggesting instead that, in certain conditions, changes in value systems could determine economic changes.

<sup>48</sup> In the course of my historical research, I encountered partial correlations between Sweden and Dundee as it became clear that the spread of Martin Luther's Protestantism reform movement gained a firm foothold early on in Dundee's religious development. This was due to the support it received from 'the most influential members of society and from the Provost and Town Council' (Whatley, Swinfen & Smith, 1993:46).

The Hardtowners' movement was limited by geographical borders that seem founded on a fear of the external 'normative society' and of trespassing on the other estates. This was an apprehension that the Hardtowners expressed to be linked to their possible recognition as 'outsiders', declaring in conversation that they would be recognised by their lack of luxury commodities, toys or clothes. The outward importance of physical appearance and speech as social dividers was clear and effective in poor Dundee communities like the Hardtown. The highly divided socio-economic structure among the communities of the city was another tool of division.

As my local knowledge and experience of the local dialect developed, I found that the explanations given by the Hardtown informants (and especially the ones they did not give) revealed a fragmented, individual, internal and external environment. This environment held strong notions of fear, paranoia and aggression that were reflected through violence. To be entertained, to enjoy and share the laughter of violence was considered necessary as a means of survival, communication and trade. In particular, the 'inclusion of the excluded' seemed to be partially expressed and enacted through the power struggle between Hardtown individuals and outsiders and in the performance of verbal and physical violence. Returning here to Nigel Rapport (1987) and an exploration of Hardtown tension as a language, communicative tool or an everyday physical manifestation of something, it is:

*"...serving as a vehicle for the creation of diverse meanings and identities."* (Rapport 1987:140)

In the Hardtown, most individuals considered themselves as entrepreneurs working and trading with many individuals at the same time and had their fingers in many pies at once. When I asked them directly, most of my informants did not feel comfortable in describing or considering themselves as holding or 'experiencing a double identity' (Day, Papataxiarchis & Stewart, 1999:14). Nevertheless, they felt themselves to be part of a diverse number of pieces or fragments of identities. The general feeling among my informants was that identity was something that was defined, made necessary and forced upon them by others, in particular, social services, state moral-political stigmatisation, internal networks and trading. This left the disenfranchised individual in the Hardtown with a multitude of fragments of identities that were used for a particular moment or situation and only had a temporary value or truth in any exchange or contact with others.

During my fieldwork, the picture of an ever-changing and fragmented individual Hardtown personality gradually developed: shaped by my informants' everyday stories and experiences<sup>49</sup>. In conversations, I found the Hardtowners wanted to focus on an adaptable notion of a diverse and disjointed self<sup>50</sup> and did not want to fully identify with any particular or

<sup>49</sup> During my work in the initial field sites in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee and in the final one, Hardtown, I tried to write every day, taking notes, recalling images, stories and parts of conversations as well as my thoughts on everything that occurred during the day. I continued writing during my entire fieldwork period, even though, at the time, I never knew the value or the full meaning of what I was taking down. I felt that this practice helped me to centre my thoughts and to attend to small details in an everyday world, which I otherwise might not have noticed.

<sup>50</sup> This feeling was not something that my informants considered as an opportunity for 'individual freedom', but as a process leaving them no choice (Day, Papataxiarchis & Stewart, 1999:7) with their familiarity with danger, isolation and life in the present. It was not based on a local or individual notion of individual freedom of choice, but rather what they consider as having no freedom of choice (i.e. no funds, contacts or support to get them out). Yet they are not, and should not, be considered in any way as people who 'can't help themselves', but as people



permanent role or notion. However, what they did profess was a strong belief and trust in nothing and in no one - not even themselves.

### **Ethics, confidentiality and access**

The long process of trying to gain access to local knowledge was important for the subsequent ethnographic work I undertook with the Hardtown one-parent group at the GRcc. In the first place, it revealed that individual access to these areas and groups was only granted temporarily and was continually revised by a large number of local gatekeepers. In the second place, the process also instructed me in what was acceptable and unacceptable in the different locations, among the different Hardtown individuals, and on the local levels within a group or organisation. I eventually realised that patience and knowledge or rather access to knowledge in many of these communities went hand in hand. When I ultimately understood and accepted this, I discovered some of the keys that allowed me access past most gatekeepers. I needed:

1. Patience and a keen interest (but not too keen).
2. Willingness to listen (but knowing when to become deaf).
3. Having enough money to buy everyone a cup of tea (yet still appear poor).
4. Helping others when asked (e.g. social service visits or doctor's appointments).
5. To be around when everyone else in the group was.
6. To be seen to be in the group when others were around.

At all sites I visited, I was always directly placed within a measured and controlled space, both within the locale and the emotional environment where I was monitored. My every movement, question and action were considered and evaluated. It was only within the GRcc that I ever found the time, the mutual familiarity, the acceptance and the space to reach beyond the initial levels of curious hostility. By using a measure of patience and advice, I gained further access to the impoverished one-parent everyday worlds and experiences.

When I began my work within the one-parent group in the Hardtown, I was already aware from my previous fieldwork experience that, within such socio-economically-marginal council estates, a complete *disbelief* about my presence would replace the inhabitants' initial hostility. I found myself repeatedly having to explain and state my reasons for being there. Normally defining myself as both a stranger and a foreigner, I ended up sharing with them more of my history and identity as a foreigner than would usually be expected in Hardtown. As disbelief slowly turned to acceptance, many of my informants wondered if I was mad. Why else would anyone want to come here? Nobody would if they had any choice! We would all leave if we could!

### **What was asked of me?**

Through my experiences at Diana's table in the GRcc (see chapter 2), I found that the questions they were asking me were exactly the same as those I wanted to ask my informants.

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that make the best of what is offered (ibid: 18). This was something that some of my informants would paradoxically define as a freedom in itself.

They repeatedly requested information about where I came from and why I was at the GRcc. They wanted and needed facts and stories about Sweden: a new place, a distant land.

It seemed important to my Hardtown inquisitors that I, as a stranger, did not withhold any information or help asked of me. I had to be very honest about why I was there: willingly discussing my research and talking about my reasons for considering their everyday lives and experiences. They also asked much more probing questions: how long I intended staying in the community and why they should allow me to stay! Their demeanour suggested that if I lied (which was not necessarily seen as a negative or an immoral act within the community) would not be acceptable and would easily be detected by them. It was clear that further stringent monitoring or violent reprisals would follow any breach of this, since it would be assumed that I had an ulterior motive as a spy or informant for the police or social services.

They expected openness and honesty from me and also wanted me to show due respect for the Hardtowners' notions of morality and their values, without passing judgement. For my 'foster parent' Diana, I became a status object, a source of entertainment to be gawked at and prodded without protest. For a while, this was all that was asked of me and I was not allowed access to Hardtown information, gossip, stories or local knowledge. After this probationary period, I became less of a curiosity and more of a permanent fixture, sharing in the everyday feeling of boredom in the community centre. My adoption by Diana, my daily presence in the GRcc and my participation in their daily expressions of boredom became the key to allow me past some of the Hardtown gatekeepers (cf. Chapter 3). Diana rewarded my persistence and patience by introducing me to the local behaviour, rules and values.

### Dangers

During the earliest stage of disbelief and monitoring, I became more and more aware of the dangers that everyone faced within the Hardtown everyday environment. Verbal and physical violence were commonplace and threatened anyone in Hardtown who asked questions or gave 'wrong' answers to direct or even indirect questions. The efficient Hardtown grapevine also ensured that, if the word went out, everyone knew not to deal or talk with the person in question and he/she was effectively cut off from the Hardtown environment. In my first few weeks, I witnessed many 'strangers' receiving this collective treatment, often with the simple purpose of driving them away from the GRcc. On the other hand, anyone they considered their inferiors, including local heroin addicts, received worse treatment. The worst punishment was reserved for anyone suspected of being a spy for the authorities.

There were many other dangers: muggings, assaults (beatings or rape) and knifings. None of these were unusual experiences for a stranger walking into Hardtown or a local with few networks in Hardtown to give him/her at least partial security (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6).

However, I was lucky enough to avoid some of these dangers by acquiring protection and subsequent fostering from Diana, who held a high position within the local hierarchy of the GRcc and in the community. Her own elevated position within the Hardtown hierarchy was attributed to her personal fighting prowess, her ability as a 'borrower' and, not least, her Hardman brothers. Diana was one of the leading members of the one-parent group that I met during my first visit to the community centre and held court around one of the most central and



strategically placed tables in the GRcc<sup>51</sup>. She was also the primary gatekeeper I had to face within the community centre. She undertook most of the harshest probing, monitoring and threatening that I had to get through but, once satisfied, she took me under her wing and tried to instruct me about some of the dangers and the rules I needed to play by to survive. She clearly used her power in the community to place me within a partially secure environment; away from any everyday dangers that would otherwise have been my initiation into the GRcc. In this way, she ensured that they were postponed until I was, in her estimation, ready to deal with them properly. Moreover, Diana tried to teach me the correct local way to lie, to fight and how to present myself by walking, talking and moving in a more convincing manner. When I first came under her guidance, she advised me that my behaviour lacked aggression, attitude, a sense of danger and any suggestion of street wisdom. During these conversations Diana also emphasised that the success of my education and my subsequent reception in the community were important to her, since she was my mentor and my conduct reflected on her.

### *Ethics – Confidentiality*

In Hardtown, I was specifically asked by and gave my assurances to my informants that I would not discuss or mention certain 'criminal or illegal' actions and activities unless names and some biographical and personal details were changed, including the actual name of the council estate.

I was strongly advised not to describe activities such as benefit fraud, muggings, drug deals or assaults, in a way that could directly identify individuals or the community and thus place them in any danger from the police or social services. I was also asked not to tell their stories, tales or recount their crimes to others within the community unless I was specifically told it was all right to do so as this might otherwise place them in danger from reprisals that they were not prepared for. This would also depart from the accepted reciprocal exchange of stories or gossip used in bartering and would amount to giving something away for free.

I was also asked and expected to accept and respect local taboos, the most important of which was having no direct contact with 'outsiders' such as the police or social services staff, unless this was through verbal violence. It was made especially clear that the strongest taboos in the community were spying on others and informing on others on behalf of these outsiders, any suspicion of which would result in stringent punishment (see Chapter 6). Another taboo was stealing or selling on another's turf, unless he/she was skilful enough to get away with it.

Bearing these sensitive issues in mind, I felt that the highest ethical consideration was required and I was obliged to honour the Hardtowners' requests to protect their anonymity<sup>52</sup>. I have therefore not included photographs or reproductions of any of the informants, locations or actions described in this thesis.

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<sup>51</sup> This table was in a 'blind spot' for the community centre staff and their security cameras.

<sup>52</sup> In accordance with their wishes, I have altered the names, ages and details of my informants and the Hardtown community itself.

## *The Police and their presence*

All of my informants, individually and collectively, were adamant that I did not give any details about criminal offences that could lead to an arrest. This prohibition was extended to specific details about local opinions on the police and their presence within the Hardtown. I found that the issue of the police (*the fuckin' poelise*) was highly sensitive locally and was not taken lightly or discussed carelessly. If the subject arose, the immediate local response was usually lowered voices. However, if police appeared in the GRcc, there was a mixed response, with many lowering their voices but some rapidly entered into *wido* arguments, directly in the faces of the police.

It seemed to me that these reactions to the police almost took on the form of ritualistic avoidance or fear, with my informants trying to ward off the local version of the 'devil': *them fucking evil cunts. Ken like di were di devil come at ye! Fucking slinging their evil pig eyes on yer shit, like*. To a few of my informants, anyone showing a casual disregard for or any mention of the police, which was not accompanied by the necessary fear, disrespect, irritation and anger, was transformed, in the general paranoia of the community, into an indication that he/she must be an informant (cf. Chapters 5 and 6). Some of my most paranoid informants even suggested that there was a risk of the police getting their 'evil eyes' on them or their doors kicked in if the subject was raised in any context.

Every time that I tried to discuss or clarify anything regarding the police or criminal activity, it was not treated contextually like any other sensitive issue. As one of my informants expressed it: *ken mate eh is nea the done thing like!* The general consensus was that the police were considered as something unmentionable in 'polite' and public conversation. Like a bad smell, someone else had to broach the subject first. Under these circumstances, I would have found it inappropriate and highly dangerous to sit in on discussions about the police, even if I had been an active participant in and not a participant observer of the informal market.

For these reasons, I did not have the opportunity to venture deeply into this topic or any of its bordering areas<sup>53</sup>. I felt and still feel that this would endanger my informants, their 'work' in the informal market and their status within the community.

Moreover, I believe that if I started to unravel these relationships, I would offend my personal judgement, conscience and sense of morality, not to mention that this would also be against the ethos and the local notions of morality of this community and its individuals.

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<sup>53</sup> For example, I was unable and unwilling to examine in depth the complex relationship between the police and the community: the police presence and tactics; individual or gang arrests and activities. For the same reasons, I did not find out in detail how many of my informants had been in prison or *hassled* (their word); nor was I able to give much consideration to the specific insults the informants and police mouthed off to each other during *wido* sessions.

### **What is in the thesis**

**Chapter 1:** This chapter presents a general history of the ethnographic site, the GRcc, the Hardtown and the city of Dundee. It also gives a visual representation of the Hardtown landscape through a brief narrative account of my first walk alone through town and on the road to the GRcc.

**Chapter 2:** This chapter considers the Hardtown notions of spatiality and the power dichotomy and verbal violence of the *wido* dichotomy between frequenters and staff. This is done through a description of the importance placed on movements and notions of belonging to the local, spatial 'Us' and 'Them' and who can sit where and with whom within the GRcc.

**Chapter 3:** This chapter provides a brief description and life history of my five main informants. It also gives a description and interpretation of the daily routine of the everyday frequenters of the GRcc, demonstrating that it is part of a local culture of boredom. On an individual basis, this boredom places importance on and results in an intense interest in the finer points of the individual's activities and status in the community. This chapter also describes how this self-knowledge, which is shared on a daily basis, plays an important part in the ambivalent, unstable, fluid and fragmented trading relationships between local individuals. This chapter shows that the depth of information access depends on access to trading relations, which in turn depends on the individual's standing in the community (cf. Chapters 4, 5 and 6).

**Chapter 4:** This chapter discusses the Hardtown residential units and the importance of kinship within this socio-economically challenged community. It does so by questioning whether the kinship structures in urban post-industrial environment have broken down. My investigation of the Hardtown residential units indicates that family is still considered an important concept within the community. It influences positions within the internal community stratification and access to trading possibilities, thus affecting the individual's access to sustenance and chances for daily survival. The trading bonds between family and social networks are strong but fluid, unstable and in a constant flux. The importance placed on Hardtown affiliations is combined with a large dose of suspicion and paranoia. For instance, my informants often declared that, *while you might love your sister or brother, anyone could become an informant for the Social Services, even your own family!*

**Chapter 5:** This chapter focuses on contextual notions of work. It describes and investigates the local notions and representations of work and morality, partly through the illustrative use of an informant success story. The chapter looks further into these notions of work: parenthood, attending a community centre, getting a giro-wage, and taking part in the informal economy. These Hardtown notions of work and morality show clear indications of being fragmented and contradictory in structure, while being closely connected with the informal market, parenthood, and a dichotomised opposition to the state's moral ideals, in particular the work ethic.

**Chapter 6:** This chapter investigates the performance of verbal and physical violence and their contextual importance within Hardtown. It considers the local notions of violence, morality and their positions within the manifestations of power and hierarchy. For example, it contains a discussion of local Hardtown legitimisation of a contextually fluid and fragmented moral discourse, closely linked with the informal market. The chapter also investigates the local notion of the Hardman.

## **1 DUNDEE AND THE HARDTOWN**

*"In books lie the soul of the whole Past  
Time; the articulate audible voice of the Past,  
when the body and material substance of it  
has altogether vanished like a dream."*

- Thomas Carlyle.

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### **Introduction**

This chapter introduces the ethnographic foundation of my research and places my fieldwork site contextually in its past and present, as Thomas Carlyle so poetically describes in the above quotation.

To highlight the socio-economical structure and position of the Hardtown community within British society, I first consider Dundee then narrow the focus to my ethnographic site by drawing a comparison between the more affluent community of Broughty Ferry and the Hardtown. The chapter concludes with a brief introduction to the Hardtown community and my main, everyday, ethnographic site, the GRcc in the Hardtown.

During my initial fieldwork, questions arose which focused my attention on the groups and subcultures of the Hardtown in Dundee and on its dichotomised, socio-economically marginalized, social structure. Dundee is presently a ghost of its former industrial prosperity and the city's last two centuries of dual socio-economic images coincided with my interest in investigating the processes of post-industrial power dichotomies between internal and external forces as expressed in daily contextual viewpoints.

Industrial Dundee, viewed through Weber's (1949) idealised image of the petite and haute bourgeoisie that led the industry and the nation during its industrial heyday, would have presented Dundee itself as a symbolic creation of a socio-economic ideal or a capitalist heaven. I propose to contrast this image with the more realistic images of its 'skewed occupational and social structure' found in the marginal poverty encountered in the historical records of Dundee (Weber 1949:18).

Dundee's occupational and social structure has collapsed during the last 60 years, with the closure of most of its industry. This left poor, unskilled, industrial workers<sup>54</sup> with very few employment possibilities: they were now unemployed, with little chance of acquiring work of that type in the future. As a result, both the city and a large part of its employable inhabitants were placed on the economic fringes of society.

Today's economically marginal Dundee communities can therefore be described and viewed as a prime example of a socio-economic process that has resulted in a disenfranchised working class: the same working class that was previously praised as the foundation of British industrial and economic expansion. These communities and their disenfranchised<sup>55</sup> inhabitants

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<sup>54</sup> They did manual work in the factories: cleaning up around the machine workers or running with replacement wool-spools for the weavers, etc.

<sup>55</sup> Dundee's socio-economic development would therefore be a symbolic conceptualisation of a process of social and economic and moral disenfranchisement of individuals, groups and communities within a society based on a centralised state - due to this state's connections with moral, emotive, marginalizing and political rhetoric.



have become separated from today's economic market and they have reverted to economical and social marginality. They have been disenfranchised by, for example, their marginalized locations, their low socio-economic status and their lack of production capital, employment and the means to attract new industry. This essentially leaves them without any possibility of contributing to today's governmental wealth as described by Whatley (1992, 1993). Present day Dundee incorporates many of the instrumental components, such as political rhetoric and strong state, defined by E. Gellner (1995) as necessary for the successful control and structure of a modern society. At the same time, it disregards the poor and provides an inadequate economical basis for the process of wealth creation, which Gellner (1995) considers are essential for the regeneration of a city like Dundee in today's global economy.

When I was still questioning the suitability of using Dundee and the Hardtown as an ethnographic site, I became fascinated by the possible existence of the community's politics of resistance and empowerment. This interest was sparked by finding historical references to a culture of protesting and rioting by Dundee's working class, which was otherwise excluded from the political process. According to Whatley (1992, 1993), the strong historical evidence for community-based 'political' action involved a large percentage of females from the lower working class in Dundee. I felt that this warranted further investigation, given the historically assumed 'docile'<sup>56</sup> nature of the disenfranchised, lower-class, working or non-working females and males in the city: an assumption that is still perpetrated today by the marginalizing, state-sponsored political rhetoric against the socio-economically and morally disenfranchised.

I also felt that the Hardtowners' tales and behaviour were a possible indication of the development of communal politics and resistance. This was a communal opposition that was reflected by their indifferent attitude, scornful remarks and verbal violence against external forces such as the community centre staff or benefit agencies. The Hardtowners would turn up at meetings with these agents of the state under the influence of drugs or alcohol and took an active part in the illegal trade within the informal market. Actions like these exhibited a local form of Hardtown community politics that was voiced and structured in ways not necessarily recognisable to the establishment: as one of my informants stated, '*givin di polise the finger, like*'.

With this image of Hardtown representations of community politics fresh in my mind, I now turn to consider the local research setting, historically and at the present time.

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<sup>56</sup> During my fieldwork in the Hardtown, I noted the widespread practice of doctors prescribing strong medication to many individuals in the community. This resulted in a tired, sluggish and docile attitude in many of my informants. This is a communal form of state violence and control connected with the assumed or, I would suggest, the part-manufactured 'docility' of the disenfranchised. This apparent docility, the widespread participation in the informal market and the performance of violence suggest that some of the folk-myths of a docile working class seem to show less than the full picture.

### Research setting: Dundee now and then

The first thing anyone notices entering the modern, post-industrial Dundee is the hill known as the Law, with its fiery monument in remembrance of Dundee's losses in the Second World War.

The name Dundee draws from 'early Gaelic "*dun*" meaning either hill or fort, and "*daig*" presumably a local chief although the word also means "*fire*" - not inappropriate when one remembers that the Law is an extinct volcano' (Murray Scott, 1992:7) Murray Scott suggests that the 'city could be named after "*Daig's Fort*" or "*Hill of Fire*"' (ibid: 7).

Many histories of Dundee have been published, including popular readings, studies, pictorial reviews, commentaries on commerce and industry and accounts by famous writers. Through the eyes and pens of Christopher A Whatley (1992 and 1993), Andrew Murray Scott (1989 and 1992), S J Jones (1968), David Dorward (1998), Dave Phillips (1971 and 1981) and J M Jackson (1979), I was given a colourful and vivid image of Dundee in the past.

### Brief economic history of Dundee

Dundee is one of Scotland's oldest towns and its surrounding areas have witnessed a colourful history of battles, plague and other catastrophes. In 1991 the town celebrated the octocentenary of the granting of burghal status in 1191. Even before this date, a 'shire' of Dundee existed, indicating that it was already a centre of importance in Scotland's European trading.

By the sixteenth century, Dundee had already established itself as a leading linen and woollen manufacturing and trading town, second only to Edinburgh in Scotland's economic ladder. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Dundee's economic situation dwindled due to economic pressures, especially from Calcutta cloth, and 'there was little sign that it would be able to recapture its former prosperity in trade, grandeur in building or reputation for its literature' (Whatley, Swinfen & Smith 1993:2). The rise of Dundee as 'juteopolis' in the nineteenth century proved its critics wrong and helped to integrate the town into a global trade network, with extensive economic routes: at this time most of the flax and hemp were imported from northern Russia.

Many economists warned against the dangers of concentrating the town's industry solely on jute and records state that its economy was 'dangerously lop-sided' (ibid:13). A contemporary comparison with towns like Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen shows that Dundee generated significantly less alternative employment<sup>57</sup>. This monopoly of the jute industry would later cripple Dundee.

The situation for jute workers in Dundee was worse than in other Scottish towns such as Glasgow. Employment was more irregular; the wages were lower and the living costs were higher. Coupled with other factors such as poor living standards and overcrowding, Dundee's workers were despairingly poor.

<sup>57</sup> By 1911, the employment situation in textiles and clothing in Dundee had worsened, but it 'never fell below 50 per cent before the First World War': compared with Glasgow and Aberdeen, where employment fell from ca. 38 to 17% (Whatley, Swinfen & Smith 1993:13).



Doherty (1992) gave a clear picture of Dundee's economic situation: between 1850 and 1900, Dundee's population grew from 79,000 to 160,000 with the influx of workers to sustain its growing industry. In 1902, Dundee saw the 'apogee' of the jute industry, but the vulnerability of an industrial town that had come to depend on a single industry was evident in the 50% drop that occurred in the town's industry over the following year (ibid: 36). In spite of the upturn in jute exports during the First World War, employment continued to drop: by 1915 it had fallen to 41,220, in 1924 to 28,000 and by 1938 the numbers had dropped 38%. This economic low tide hit the low-wage-women working in the Dundee jute mills especially hard, since their employment numbers decreased to an overall 39%.

The start of the Second World War in 1939 brought the jute industry new custom from the government, which also established an extension of control regulations for the industry in 1939-40 that lasted in various forms until 1969. With the support of these control regulations, the economic downturn of Dundee's jute industry was delayed. However, it was fighting a losing battle against new techniques, a relaxation of the regulations on jute, stiff economic competition and its cost-effective replacement by synthetic materials. The employment kept plummeting and decreased to only 8,000 individuals working in the jute industry in 1976.

In 1945, Dundee had received 'Development Area Status' in accordance with the government's 'Decentralisation of Industry Act' and built its first industrial estate, offering services on site to the new, light-engineering industries. This attracted a few major companies such as NCR, Timex, Veeder Root and Dayco, who provided 12% of Dundee's employment over the next few years.

During the 1960s, Dundee's unemployment was only around 3% - lower than the Scottish average, but still higher than the English equivalent. However, Dundee's economic foundations were very fragile and, when the global economic crisis struck in the 1970s, the effect was marked. This crisis hit all industries in Dundee badly and eliminated much of the city's potential for industrial growth. Surveying employment data and the whole economic structure of Dundee's industry, the cumulative effects of the global economic recession and the introduction of new technology during the 1970s and 1980s were catastrophic. During the 1980s, long-term unemployment became a major social problem, especially on some of the housing estates, which had a proportionally higher number of redundancies.

Dundee had expanded rapidly during the urbanisation and jute industrialisation of the town. In the years after 1901, economic growth and industry decreased, but from the 1970s to 1980s 'for the first time in 100 years' the population decreased (Doherty 1992:35).

During the late 1980s and the 1990s a few improvements, such as the Dundee Project and its Enterprise Zone, generated some opportunities for employment. However, Doherty (1992) concluded that the success of redeveloping specific localities like this was ambiguous. The socio-economic future and the changes Dundee set for itself as the 'City of Discovery' have yet to be discovered: as Doherty stated, 'it is still unclear as to where that new base is to be found' for the relocation and revitalisation of industry and employment (1992:38).

Today, Dundee's main growth area for employment is in the service sector, such as banking, commerce and education. While the manufacturing sector has fallen since 1989 to just above 20%, the 'proportion of women in the workforce however is still higher than the national average' (Whatley, Swinfen & Smith 1993:186).

### Radical town

Dundee has long been described as a 'radical town', as the radical reform movement grew especially strong there (Whatley, Swinfen & Smith 1993). In Dundee a keen support for radical ideas was found as early as the 1790s<sup>58</sup>. This may be interpreted as a natural reaction to the severity of the contemporary laws and divisions of the moral, criminal and socio-economical strata<sup>59</sup>. The far-reaching results of the radical reform movement and the strength it found in Dundee would thus match the severity of the constraints forced on its population. It is interesting to compare the individualism of this particular movement with modern notions of empowerment and resistance.

Now as then, there are parts of the City that are not interested in any active, political movements or organisations. However, many apolitical individuals took part in the historical riots or 'community politics' described by Whatley, Swinfen & Smith as:

*"... The inhabitants of east coast ports like Dundee objected to the shipment outwards of grain when local shortages were threatened, or because of suspicions of profiteering on the part of bakers and merchants at a time when medieval trading regulations, which had tended to favour the urban consumer, were being usurped in the interests of producers and free market principles. The riot was a form of community politics, where the unenfranchised seized the opportunity of forcefully reminding their social superiors that the status quo and the crowd's deference were conditional upon them meeting their obligations towards those they ruled."* Whatley, Swinfen & Smith 1993:96

I therefore propose that one should also consider contemporary local notions and indications that the disenfranchised of Hardtown do in fact take part in the unofficial political scene; by trading in the informal market, often linked to the procuring of foodstuffs for their families, and by their drunken behaviour (see chapters 4-6). Many in Dundee still have issues such as poverty and starvation to deal with in their lives, as much as their historical forebears did: 'bread was such an important part of everyone's diet the Dundee magistrates in times of shortage restricted the amount of grain any one person could buy to what was needed in his own household' (ibid: 35).

Indications of the strong feelings regarding this restriction can be found as early as 1611, when an 'Edinburgh merchant, James Kerr, defied the magistrates by buying corn in bulk' (ibid: 35). He was subsequently jailed twice on account of his rejection and disregard of the law.

In 1773, 1792 and 1812, meal riots occurred. This time the reaction and disregard of the law came from the opposite socio-economical camp within Dundee. In 1773, the wealthy owners and merchants in Dundee 'tried to export their grain while the local people were starving. The merchants could get a better price abroad and refused to sell it cheaper locally –

<sup>58</sup> In the late 1700s, the conditions for the Dundee citizens 'were very basic and life was harsh and unfair, but new political ideas were spreading from France and from America' (Murray Scott 1992:31). The radical movement supported by parts of the Dundee press and many of its poor joined radical groups such as 'the Friends Of Liberty' and 'United Scotsmen' (ibid: 32). Many radical groups spoke for 'the restoration of a Scottish Parliament', and for a long time Dundee faced regular 'outbreaks of disorder' (ibid: 32).

<sup>59</sup> Whatley, Swinfen & Smith (1993) described life for the ordinary Dundonian in 1548 as a time of hardship and despondency. Heavy fines and punishments were set for most things that might be considered as enjoyable for the working man and woman, such as drinking and gambling.



and lose profits. A large crowd gathered at the harbour and when the owners remained adamant, the grain ships were promptly looted' (Murray Scott 1992:34).

Another indication of the privations faced by the poorest in Dundee occurred in 1812, when James Duncan, a 'corn merchant was assaulted and "maimed" by a mainly female crowd', for exporting corn locally needed (ibid: 34). The participation of the poorer classes in 'community politics' further substantiates the radicalism found within Dundee's poor communities. The printing houses and many newspapers supported the spread of radical ideas to all classes.

By 1837, the rioting and other public disturbances<sup>60</sup> in Dundee had led to a permanent military presence. The manufacturers had demanded this, since on many occasions a drunken 'crowd turned its wrath on Dundee's more prosperous citizens and particular objectionable local individuals and institutions' (Whatley, Swinfen & Smith 1993:102). In this way they protested against the slavery of the factories, which made them work constantly, with only a few precious holidays, if they wanted to 'earn a living wage' (ibid: 102).

The large proportion of women workers were excluded by their gender from the traditional circuit of politics. Their participation in the 'community politics' meant that they took their opinions to the streets: something that may perhaps explain the strong foothold gained by the suffragette movement in Dundee. Leah Leneman's (1993) study indicated that the leaders as well as the foundation of supporters arose here from the working-class women, in contrast to the movements in, for instance, Lancashire. Historically, Dundee women were important through 'community politics' and their 'political' importance is still in evidence today.

### Housing

Whatley (1993) described the slums and the overall constant inadequacy and poverty of Dundee housing. Fifteenth century accounts show that, when the main streets were filled, the back lands of Dundee functioned as housing areas. Then as now, the houses of the poor and less well off were situated between burgeoning industrial sites.

Overcrowding and poor quality housing typified the socio-economic situation of the lower working class and the poor of Dundee in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<i>Overcrowding in Dundee housing between 1896 and 1905</i>		
	<i>Population</i>	<i>Overcrowding<sup>61</sup> in one and two rooms</i>
<i>Glasgow</i>	<i>762,000</i>	<i>66%</i>
<i>Dundee</i>	<i>161,000</i>	<i>70%</i>

Between 1841 and 1861, Dundee's population rose by 30,000, but only 586 houses were built to cope with this population increase. William Edgar, Russell Rowbotham and John Stanforth (1992) show that, even though progress was being made in 1915, the housing problems of the working class were still unresolved. They also found that rent constituted 'as

<sup>60</sup> Public drunkenness and loud behaviour are indicative of the historical and present forms of community politics and resistance.

<sup>61</sup> Whatley (1993) commented that two-thirds of Dundee's population in 1911 lived in these rooms, sharing one or two rooms between one or several large families, with a bathroom in the corridor shared by several flats.



much as 50% of net income' for some households, the old and single in particular (Edgar, Rowbotham and Stanforth 1992:41), a situation little changed in the 1990s. This indicates a continuing large division between the different socio-economic strata within Dundee.

The 1935 Housing Act brought the debate of rent and rebates to the forefront in Dundee. The local council was divided on the issue and felt that it might create a 'second class of tenant', due to the high levels of unemployment, low wages and the large qualifying group, which would lower the rebates (ibid: 46).

The houses built after 1935 for 'slum clearance' and eliminating overcrowding among the lower income classes partially failed as few could economically afford or wanted the new housing (ibid:46-47). While the housing problems of overcrowding and bad standards improved in some parts of Dundee, in others it had only become worse.

I see the similarity in some of the social, economical and structural problems faced in the substandard repairs and the defacement by vandals in estates like Beechwood and Mid-Craigie, mentioned in Edgar et al. (ibid: 47), and in some of today's council estates like the Hardtown, after long-term building plans were made and carried out by the council in re-building and re-housing programs.

<i>Council House Sizes built since 1919</i>				
	<i>1&amp;2-apts<sup>62</sup></i>	<i>3-apts</i>	<i>4-apts</i>	<i>5+apts</i>
<i>1919</i>	-	<i>60%</i>	<i>34%</i>	<i>6%</i>
<i>1924</i>	<i>17%</i>	<i>72%</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>1%</i>
<i>1930</i>	<i>9%</i>	<i>70%</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>1%</i>
<i>1935</i>	-	<i>45%</i>	<i>45%</i>	<i>10%</i>
<i>1945-58</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>43%</i>	<i>48%</i>	<i>4%</i>
<i>1959-68</i>	<i>22%</i>	<i>52%</i>	<i>24%</i>	<i>2%</i>

Despite this progress, it was found that an additional 7,500 to 10,000 houses were needed by 1981 to eliminate overcrowding and inadequate housing.

A 1960 social survey indicated that Dundee families with male earners in employment constituted only 84% of the Scottish average (cf. Edgar et al. 1992). However, 41% of the workforce in Dundee at the time comprised low-paid, factory-working females with their own households, for whom housing represented a comparatively large part of their earnings (ibid).

### *Social division*

The historical social divisions in Dundee were marked and the employment in the jute industry did nothing to improve this situation. Factors like the high costs of living, low wages and the poor and cramped housing made life harsh for the poor of Dundee.

In the 1850s, Dundee's social strata consisted uniformly of a smaller middle-class than the other main Scottish towns, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen (Whatley et al. 1993:14). For example, a survey from 1861 indicated that Dundee's middle-class comprised 11.6% of the

<sup>62</sup> Apartments.

population<sup>63</sup> compared with the Scottish average of 16.6%. This concentration of working class and poor in Dundee continued throughout the nineteenth century and into the next.

The gender divisions within the mills and factories were just as marked, resulting in supervisory and other higher positions as male-only occupations. The low wages and precious little leisure time for women working in the mills and factories allowed them little opportunity to enjoy any commercial entertainment. This probably limited their choice of leisure pursuits, as one of my older Hardtowners stated, to excursions, promenading and gossiping; which I found were just as prevalent in the poorer areas of today's Dundee as during the Juteopolis.

### *The deserving and undeserving*

The 'self-styled guardians'<sup>64</sup> of Dundee's middle-classes, then as now in their moral superiority, went to great lengths to 'prevent the 'rude, disorderly and often indecent conduct of young lads and thoughtless young girls,' who spoke 'a mill patois incomprehensible except in the swear-words... the voice was harsh and the language hoarse' (Murray Scott 1989:46).

Today's socio-economic and political elite use the same phrases that can be found in the condemnation of, for instance, the one-parent families who are thus marginalized and stigmatised by the British state's ostracizing moral-political rhetoric. This negative discourse relates and berates the shameful, undignified behaviour of today's one-parents and is a form of rhetoric very similar to past invective against yesterday's disenfranchised mill girls and working-class males.

During the 1800s, a privileged elite provided for the homeless, destitute and sick in society from the heights of their charitable disdain. Nothing in the way of work was created and no moral support offered to hard-working women in Dundee. For example, the elite middle-class organisation, the Dundee Social Union, thought that the answer was not 'better housing nor higher wages but "more occupation for **men, not women** as the crying need for Dundee"' (1989:46-47, emphasis added). Paraphrasing Leo Howe (1990: Introduction), the basis of women's undeservingness was to their social, gendered and economic disadvantage.

Considering the high percentage of female employment and single households found in Dundee in the 1800s, these women encountered a moral outrage: instead of recognising the hardships of working women, the elite complained about how many women did not work, the demeanour of the ones who did work, and how the work of women took jobs away from men. At this time, traditional family structure prescribed that men were the breadwinners and that moral (i.e. middle and upper class) women stayed at home. These moral guardians even went as far as defining women working as 'a wicked example of Capitalism's propensity to destroy the home' and considered it as an 'inversion of civilisation', which would destroy the fabric of

<sup>63</sup> Whatley, Swinfen & Smith (1993) defined the middle class as men and women in skilled so called white-collar professions such as banking, legal professions and clerks, managers and industrial entrepreneurs.

<sup>64</sup> During the 1850s, Lord Cockburn and other members of the socio-economic elite commented about the moral and social state of Dundee, comparing it 'disparagingly' to 'a sink of atrophy, which no moral flushing' would be able to clean (Whatley, 1992:12). Although some improvement in the population's temperance was found during the latter part of the nineteenth century, historical records continued to show that the lower working-class population of Dundee spent most of its leisure time getting inebriated.



society (Murray Scott 1989:46-47). Even in our contemporary moral political forum, this stigmatising discourse sounds rather familiar.<sup>65</sup>

Murray Scott (1989:47) described Dundee as a city that always harboured strong women who, according to popular cultural-moral myth, were so aggressive that they resembled 'working-class males'. In keeping with this, I propose that the aggressive behaviour and verbal violence of Hardtown women might perhaps be seen as a post-industrial imitation of or the verbal core of community politics. This is particularly so since this female violence seems morally negated by politically rhetorical voices within the British press, who seem to consider that this kind of violent behaviour is the sole property of males.<sup>66</sup> It is important to note that this was locally described as a form of activism, which did not introduce any specific gender division but which happened to include women (see Chapter 6). The older frequenters of the community centre told me many stories of the past days of Dundee. They described a poor working-class community in which the majority of women were employed within the jam and jute industries, while many men stayed at home to take care of the house and children. This is a past of urban disadvantage, which has brought us to the contemporary Dundee communities of single parents, which mirror their undeserving moral hangover.

Recent riverside developments have not yet turned into the success the city hoped they would and have never attracted significant job opportunities. To combat this failure, the city council is now trying to awaken its citizen's pride in the city. There have been several new developments within the city centre to try to upgrade the visual structure of the city and they have even built a new art centre. However, the self-styled 'City of Discovery' remains, in the minds and hearts of many Dundonians, the 'city of lost opportunities' (D. Dorward 1998:1).

### **Dundee and the Hardtown – location and stratification**

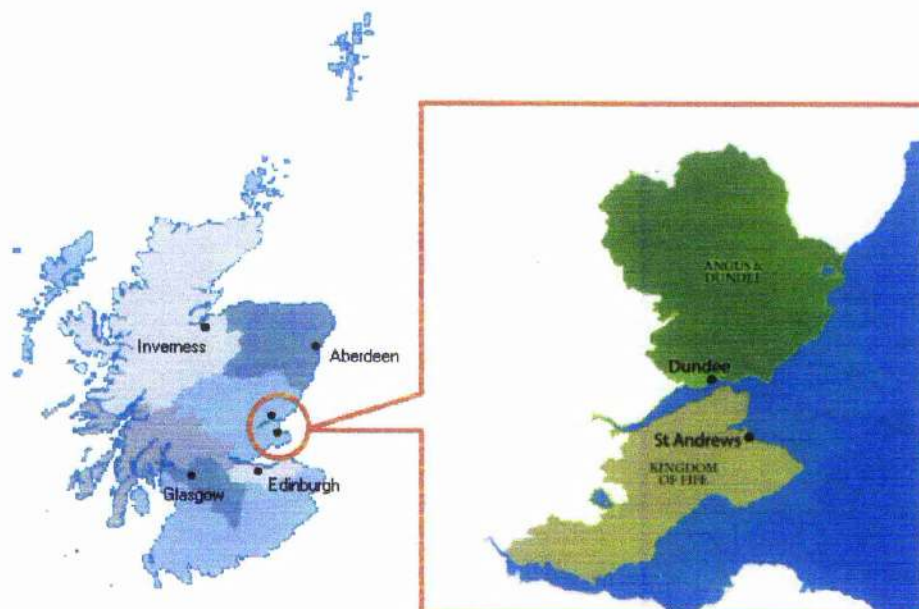
In this section, I locate the research area contextually within Great Britain and then turn to a brief description of Dundee's social stratification.

The general demographic location of my fieldwork area is the lowlands of Scotland, as indicated in the map, which shows Dundee situated by the River Tay, with Edinburgh to the south and Aberdeen to the north. The second map is a representation of the modern Dundee, showing Broughty Ferry to the east of the city.

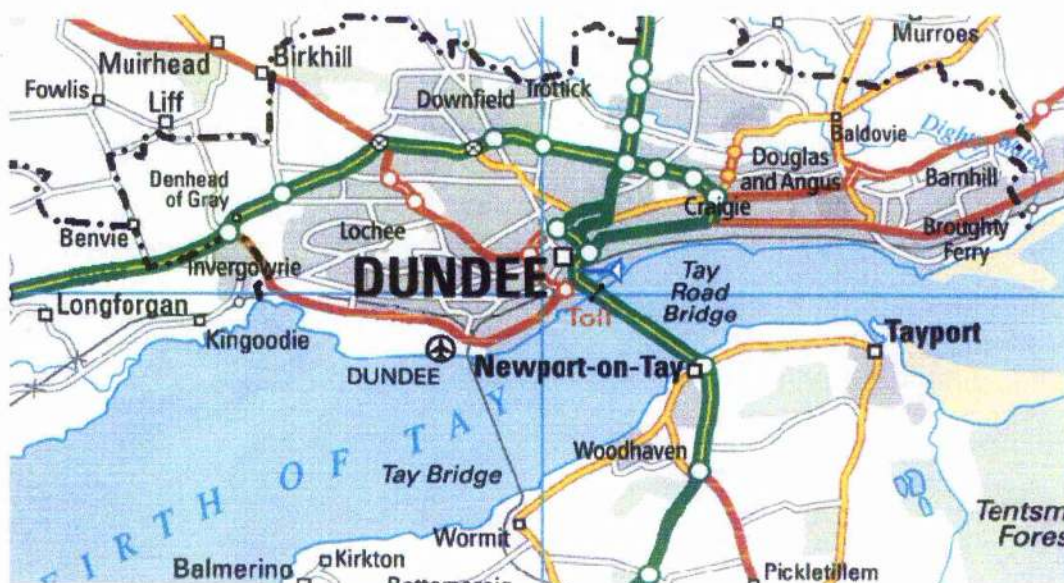
<sup>65</sup> It is interesting to realise that the Lawrence manifesto on one-parents, published in an article in the Times in 1997, drew its support or perhaps origin from a moral-political discourse dating from 1800. This strikes me as enlightening in regards to the substance and origin of moral-political rhetoric and perhaps also rather worrying. This also clarifies that, even in the past, our leaders and 'self-styled guardians' assumed that it was possible to assign two diametrically opposed moral-political standpoints at the same time.

<sup>66</sup> See, for example, an article in the Sunday Mail (27<sup>th</sup> February 2000:31) on the 'dehumanising' violence of women.

*Map 1: Map of Scotland, highlighting the Dundee/ St Andrews area*



*Map 2: Schematic diagram of Dundee*





From the 1960s, but mainly during the 1970s-90s, Dundee evolved with difficulty from an industrial city with its main employment concentrated in the textile and jam factories, to a more 'inchoate economic structure'<sup>67</sup> (J Doherty 1992:24). The occupational basis changed from manufacturing to service occupations, as shown below.

*Source: approximate readings from a chart on the employment figure in Dundee from the Department of Employment and Census of Employment (Doherty 1992:25)*

	1965	1970	1975	1980
Service	43%	44%	56%	65%
Textiles	19%	14%	8%	7%
Manufacturing	47%	47%	36%	28%

This change in the employment infrastructure created a high number of unemployable individuals and communities of temporary, unskilled, low-class, industrial workers. These changes in Dundee correlate with the emergence of 'post-industrial cities' all over the UK in a national transformation of the economic structure (ibid:24). A feeling of disempowerment in the face of the developing socio-economic exclusion seemed strong within the Hardtown: as one of my informants expressed it: *Eh ken eh will nea gi a job like .We ken like, but eh does nea make us feel be 'er ken, nor tha others are just as poor, ken. Eh dinna gi ye any mere food for yer bairns like.*

Considering the situation in the Hardtown, this suggests that these economically and socially marginalized communities were adversely affected and deconstructed by internal and external devaluation. This in turn resulted in a weaker position or exclusion from a centralised state, which is based on continued capitalist production incorporating economic foundation, power-status division and free markets. Within Dundee, this produced a social stratification, which has left socio-economic marginalized communities such as the Hardtown in a position of dependence on state benefits and without a conventional socio-economic or political power base through, for example, legal employment. The poverty trap was initiated and caught all of the non-productive, dependent, unwanted and marginalized communities, such as Hardtown, by their exclusion from the socio-economic processes of power and status: normally based on the contribution and value of the constant production of wealth in the British capitalist system.

I suggest that this socio-economic segregation has been further enforced by moral-political rhetoric creating stigmatised factions, viewed and defined as dependent on *handouts* (local Hardtown terminology). These *handouts* are in the form of benefits, which are infused with moral, social, economical and gendered stigma and individuals have thus been coerced into internal and external exclusion from the ideal, normative society based on production, wealth creation and conformity.

In today's society, Hardtowners find the state-controlling arms of coercion in many social security offices, where many of my informants have been forced to divulge intimate details of their sexual lives or marital status in front of a queue of 10-25 individuals. They had

<sup>67</sup> The types of employment available varied widely during the last 60 years. C. Whatley (1992:13) stressed that Dundee concentrated its economy dangerously on the jute industry, and showed that, compared with Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh, 'Dundee offered relatively little in the form of alternative employment'. By building industrial parks in the outer areas of Dundee, the city managed to attract some smaller businesses such as light engineering or call centres. A media community has defined the latter as the 'sweatshops of the modern west', implying that they recreate the subjugation and exploitation of unskilled workers by global or national firms.

to state whether they took drugs, drink or had ever had a permanent relationship, fearing that they would not otherwise receive their benefit cheques. This restrictive power of the state is directed at individuals who have already been stigmatised and placed in socio-economically weak and marginalized positions by dependence on the state. For instance, by using political rhetoric, the British state has stigmatised socio-economically marginalized groups, such as one-parents, by maligning them as morally inadequate and promiscuous.

Dundee in the year 2000 is a highly stratified city with socio-economically separate communities segmented through a strict mental and geographical spatial stratification (see Chapter 2). These boundaries are often maintained and defended by verbal and physical violence, either on an individual or community-based level. During my work in Dundee, I found that the aggressive enforcement of community borders by such spatially violent and inclusive behaviour was encountered more frequently within low-income housing estates like the Hardtown. Here are a few examples of local feeling on the matter: *Eh man yes fuckin ow us an tha! Those posh en's should ne come ower here an tha the ha their own nice places and tha, ken? Like the only wanna gawk at the poor folk, like. And take the piss, ken.*

One of the other consequences of the closure of most of the city's industry was high unemployment among unskilled factory workers. This heightened unemployment ratio in correlation with accumulative changes in the occupational structure from industry to service occupations, consequently affected Dundee and its socio-economic stratification in several ways<sup>68</sup>. For example, these changes created a larger low-income class of part-time workers<sup>69</sup>. The financial situation became increasingly difficult for these part-time workers, as their low income restricted their outgoings on essential items such as food and clothing. Many found that they could not manage to sustain a family on a part-time wage, but would actually be better off living on benefits<sup>70</sup>. *Wha life is this when ye can ne gi yer bairn food, an all. Eh would be be 'er off on the giro. Eh feel like a shite like, ye ken. Like eh can ne do nout about eh. Its them ye ken the un wie money, ken.*

In the long run, it also created a high percentage of long-term unemployed with no or insufficient education, social and employment skills and with little chance of re-entering the employment market. The increase in white-collar service occupations such as call centres, locally called *sweatshops*, and other similar opportunities resulted in a re-evaluation of the status of such employment. This in turn resulted in an even more structured socio-economic stratification of these service occupations, in which status is reflected in wage levels.

Exclusion of the unemployed and/or unemployable from productive society creates large areas of socio-economically and moral-politically marginalized communities, which face ever-increasing socio-economic and moral-political pressures. One-parents are one of these marginalized communities and experience escalating pressure to join the employment force through moral-political rhetoric stigmatising them as inadequate.

<sup>68</sup> Marxist anthropologists have long investigated the connections between production, wealth creation and the socio-economic division of labour and wages. In most of today's anthropological and economical texts, there is an obvious connection between production and labour. For example, Michael Parkin & David King (1995) stated that; 'original incomes are earned by the factors of production. They consist of wages (including salaries and other forms of compensation) paid to labour, the profits earned by the owners of sole proprietorships', which are directly connected to wealth and power (1995:481).

<sup>69</sup> These part-time workers are mainly women who previously worked full-time in the textile and jam industries in Dundee.

<sup>70</sup> See Chapters 2 and 5 for further discussion on this subject.



I suggest that it is vital to consider the above processes to obtain a clear overview of the intrinsic place and interplay of power, control and poverty in connection with participation in production, wealth and wages.

Working within this fieldwork site, I found myself considering the moral-political and socio-economical imagery of the Hardtown as a stigmatised and disenfranchised society, both historically and contemporaneously. These thoughts allowed me to deliberate more than the holistic macro-interplay of power, control and poverty, linked to production and wages in the larger societal image. By this, I found that I gained a better understanding of the importance and repercussions of the individual and locally intrinsic notions, values and considerations of such power play.

### *Stratification of the Hardtown community*

In order to consider the situation and stratification found within some communities in Dundee, I compare my fieldwork area of the Hardtown as an example of a socio-economically disenfranchised community with the socio-economically oppositional community of Broughty Ferry. This is done with the help of statistical data from the Tayside Regional Council Census of 1991<sup>71</sup>.

The population changes in Broughty Ferry between 1971 and 1991 were minute: from 16,527 in 1971, down slightly to 16,085 in 1981 and then up to 17,415 in 1991. In the smaller community of Hardtown West, the comparable figures were 2,921 in 1971, down significantly to 1,994 in 1981 and then marginally up to 2,197 in 1991 (see fig. 1 in Appendix 2). This data might suggest that the population structure of the affluent Broughty Ferry is fundamentally more stable than that of the socio-economically disadvantaged community of the Hardtown. However, a number of other factors must be taken into account: for example, the difference in the sizes of the demographic areas and populations, the high proportion of old age pensioners in Hardtown, different birth rates, etc. Geographically, economically and in population terms, Broughty Ferry is richer than Hardtown West, with a high proportion of individuals who have not faced the issue of becoming 'discouraged workers'.

Paraphrasing M Parkin & D King (1995), the high-income occupational 'norm' may be defined as a middle-aged married couple, both of whom are employed. In these terms, I found that this 'norm' was much more prevalent in Broughty Ferry, particularly in relation to the high proportion of one-parents to be found in the Hardtown community. Between 1971 and 1991, there was a consistent increase in the percentage of the one-parent population in both communities. However, the increase within the Hardtown community was several times larger than the increase in Broughty Ferry (see fig. 2 in Appendix 2).

The high proportion of one-parents in Hardtown is of relevance to my research for a number of reasons<sup>72</sup>, the first of which is that my research started in the Hardtown when I

<sup>71</sup> This was the last detailed statistical overview available from the local council for these areas at the time of this analysis. My own fieldwork and the gathering of statistics ended in September 1999.

<sup>72</sup> During my initial research with Professor Ladislav Holy, I began considering the one-parent family from the viewpoint of the long-standing, historically proven moral-political and socio-economical disenfranchised group, which remains part of the contemporary British state's stigmatising discourse. I was interested in the way the one-parents viewed themselves and their local positions, within the context of an already disenfranchised group. On a micro level, I wanted to study their acceptance and integration into the informal market of the community. I also wanted to know if it was considered as a stigma in this community to have an illegitimate child. These were some

attended a one-parent group meeting in the GRcc. I found that, while most of my informants were officially registered as one-parents, many were in fact cohabiting with short-term or long-term partners. This meant that, if I wanted to study the role of these disenfranchised individuals within our contemporary, post-industrial society, I needed to be aware of any and all differences between the official statistics and the realities of Hardtown. In effect, I would need as much detail as possible from the case histories of my informants, including how many of them used to be or are currently employed.

The one-parent status was of further interest in reference to production and earnings. This was particularly relevant as I found that claiming benefit as a one-parent was seen as a locally approved means of receiving more money – their ‘giro-wage’ from the government (see Chapter 5). My informants’ marital status, pregnancies and children were also of interest as indications of temporary or permanent local social cohesion of the Hardtown, as well as for their contextual notions regarding, for example, children<sup>73</sup> as a means of attaining a higher status, while simultaneously adding links to reciprocal networks and the informal markets.

Between 1971 and 1991, there were significant differences in the percentages of economically active or employed individuals above the age of 16 in Hardtown and Broughty Ferry. Since 1971, when there were in fact proportionally more employed people in Hardtown than in Broughty Ferry, there has been a consistent decrease in this ratio in Hardtown while the ratio in Broughty Ferry has risen slightly. This is yet another sign that the community in Hardtown is disadvantaged and has consistently moved down the hierarchical level of Dundee’s socio-economic stratification (see fig. 3 in Appendix 2).

Between 1971 and 1991, the percentages of self-employed people in both Hardtown and Broughty Ferry increased. However, a more detailed inspection of the numbers from the statistical record tells its own story:

#### Hardtown

1971 52 self-employed (1.8%) from a total population of 2921  
1991 45 self-employed (2.0%) from a total population of 2197

#### Broughty Ferry

1971 483 self-employed (2.9%) from a total population of 16527  
1991 810 self-employed (4.6%) from a total population of 17415

In Hardtown, there were five fewer self-employed in 1991 than in 1971 but, because of a falling population, the percentage of self-employed actually rose! Over the same period, the number and percentage of self-employed in Broughty Ferry increased significantly.

The more stable and lower ratios of unemployment found within the affluent area of Broughty Ferry may perhaps be attributed to differences in the types of economic inactivity involved. For example, Broughty Ferry has some independently wealthy individuals who live off their investments, while Hardtown has none. Broughty Ferry is also home to a significant number of white-collar workers, who may occasionally have temporary periods out of work, but are likely to find alternative employment. By contrast, many Hardtowners above the age of 16 are hampered in finding white-collar work, the only type of employment on the increase in

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of the reasons why I initiated research within the one-parent group in the Hardtown; but this gradually developed, during and through my fieldwork, into my current line of research.

<sup>73</sup> See chapters 4 and 5.

Dundee, due to their limited education<sup>74</sup> and their lack of experience in this employment field. This effectively traps them in a life of poverty, since they have no current access to the type of unskilled industrial employment available in the past. They also lack sufficient funds to travel to find unskilled work outside the area.

Broughty Ferry also has a higher percentage of students compared with the Hardtown (see fig. 4 in Appendix 2). This results in a higher ratio of individuals with a higher education, improving access to employment opportunities within Dundee or funds needed for travelling outside the community to find work or explore other avenues.

There were also slightly higher proportions of retired individuals and the permanently ill in Hardtown than in Broughty Ferry's more affluent and static community. This may be put further into perspective by contrasting the percentages of houses with a lack of amenity and the ratios of rented accommodation to owned property in Hardtown and Broughty Ferry (see figs. 5 & 6:ibid).

The socio-economic stratification of the economically disadvantaged and marginalized community of the Hardtown is substantiated and elucidated in these statistical representations. These images illustrate the trend towards impoverishment and exclusion in communities like Hardtown, which are targets of the state's socio-economic and moral-political marginalizing discourse. In such rhetoric, these communities are often described as highly unpleasant areas, comprising unwanted 'others' and the 'undeserving' poor. The large proportion of stigmatised groups in Hardtown, such as the long-term unemployed or one-parents, both of which come under the category of the 'undeserving' poor, made the council estate of Hardtown an ideal site for the study of this power dichotomy on a local level. It was also the perfect community to undertake an investigation of a local discourse of the fragmentation, violence and morality of these disenfranchised individuals.

### **My first walk up to the Hardtown**

Yeah as I walk through the valley of death... This well-known litany from Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* briefly flashes through my head as I make my way for the first time up that long, sweaty and steep hill on crutches towards the dubious haven of the GRcc<sup>75</sup>.

The narrow, murky and dirty street winds upwards and is deeply embedded between rows of darkly menacing, grimy and broken down tenement buildings. The environment, the buildings and the streets advertise their neglect with empty, dark, broken and filthy windows and facades. Broken down and burnt-out cars, glare at me with expressions of suspicion and irritation, which mirror the glances I get from each passing face and apparel. The flapping of a few darkly stained and yellowed net curtains against the grimy brick façade gives the image of a corpse dressed in its final shroud.

<sup>74</sup> I do not suggest that Hardtowners were not offered education, but that I did not find many individuals who had graduated from school or university or admitted to having graduated. In Hardtown, basic education and studying were equated with the 'middle class' and the 'enemy' (the school as a state institution). Going to school was not seen as 'cool' or something that 'hard' traders did, by many of the young in Hardtown (the 13 to 20 age group). Many felt that there was nothing wrong with living on the 'giro', while supplementing it with other activities, as they saw their parents doing. This opinion was not unanimous: a small minority saw education as the only way to escape the community.

<sup>75</sup> The community infrastructure changed slightly during my fieldwork: the community centre was renovated and repainted, creating a nicer and brighter (or at least less broken-down) environment.

As I walk upwards, I catch glimpses of the unexpectedly fresh and clean window of a computer coffee shop. Perhaps as a portent of things to come, I see a neglected second-hand bookshop and an empty hairdresser. They share the street with a bustling mosque, a closed down second-hand clothes shop, a quiet grocery shop, a post office-chemist, a rather ordinary Asian corner shop and a smelly chip shop. All are shrouded in metal bars and fencing. The metal-covered windows and doors look more menacing than welcoming and leave me feeling oppressed.

In this gloomy and oppressed emotional state, I trudge slowly up the road, strenuously trying to move faster with every move of my crutches. I avoid all eye contact, even glances at passers by, as my initial attempt was shot down in a blaze of fire, or rather a death stare, filled with irritation, anger, suspicion and threat.

Surprisingly, the appearance, stature, facial physiognomy and individual dress seem to correspond with the spatial change and decay of the environment. The vitality so evident in the many shoppers as I passed through the city centre, seems covered, erased or coloured out by this grimy and broken down environment. Light, clarity and vitality are clouded by every small, metal-encased and dirty window on this street: so much the direct opposite of the big bright windows in the bustling city centre.

I notice that the entries or doors to the *closies*<sup>76</sup> are almost all grimy and full of dirt: broken toys, syringes, bottles and furniture litter the openings and courtyards. Once-bright blues and reds are covered and disassembled by years of dirt and generations of poverty.

As I reach my destination, I come to a standstill, looking again over the virtually continuous landscape of fencing and metal bars, covering every window and door and encircling the council housing. They make me wonder if these security measures are to protect the Hardtowners- or shield us from them?

### **The Hardtown community**

Originally, Hardtown was not built inside the mediaeval burgh of Dundee but grew instead from the northern access to the burgh's Wellgate port. It was historically known as Rotten Row, a name that D. Dorward (1998:2) suggested might have meant 'rat infested'. The strategic position of Hardtown made it a prime target for assault by Claverhouse and Montrose, who were both prevented from attacking the city directly because of its walls. For centuries, Hardtown was considered 'vastly lightsome, having a fore view, it lying so high, and the inhabitants have so much fresh air as if they were a number of miles in the country' (ibid:7). It's layout was totally unplanned and the thatched houses bustled with small traders, such as bonnet makers, weavers and cloth makers. In 1643, the Hardtown community was elevated to a barony by Charles I and subsequently given to Sir James Scrymgeour. The town bought this barony in 1697 to extend it's boundaries and Hardtown was made a municipality in 1705. In the aftermath of the 1745 uprising, the barony and its jurisdiction were proscribed and the Hardtown became a suburb of Dundee.

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<sup>76</sup> A 'closie' is a colloquial term for an entryway into a block of flats.



At the start of the industrial era, tenement buildings were erected to house the factory workers. Farming and the rural way of life were now part of the past. According to Dorward (1998), Hardtown took on a depressing, grotesque and dirty air, with badly constructed houses and only small-scale industries. Today, it seems that the area is still waiting to get back to its former 'vastly lightsome' appearance (ibid: 7).

In our post-industrial society, time has certainly moved on but the basic way of life in this poor area of Dundee remains essentially the same: the architecture of the community still mainly consists of old tenement buildings, with the addition of a few recent, well-fenced, high rises. In time-honoured fashion, you are either born into the community or are placed there by the social services into one of the many 'multis' that go by the nickname 'little Beirut'

The largest ethnic minority in Hardtown is Pakistani, many of whom arrived in the 1960s, together with their families, to work in the jute industry. In the 1990s, they live, work and are partly integrated within Hardtown, but are not generally considered as part of the Hardtown Community – at least, not as the locals in the GRcc understand the term. Even after over 30 years in Hardtown, they are still seen as strangers but are tolerated because of their quiet nature and their willing participation in the community fairs, for which they contribute food. When asked directly, the frequenters of the GRcc admitted (my translation of the words used) that the Pakistani minority were equally poor and disenfranchised, the main difference being that they did not take part in the local informal market<sup>77</sup> or verbal and physical violence. However, I found out through local gossip that, while there had been instances of racism and fights between white and Asian 'gangs', avoidance seemed to be the everyday rule followed by both groups in the community.

During my initial work in Broughty Ferry, Albert Street and the west side of Dundee, people painted a picture of the Hardtown as one of the most socio-economically poor communities in Dundee, with a high rate of crime<sup>78</sup>. For instance, a council worker told me that: *'The Hardtown is an outlet for prisons and is full of inadequate, misadjusted individuals as well as those who cannot live anywhere else or who cannot deal with some areas of life.'* Thus, before I had even set foot in Hardtown, I was warned by 'outsiders' to expect suspicion, anger and verbal, even physical, violence. Even after I was 'accepted' within the community, the message was exactly the same from 'insiders'. Any stranger who doesn't belong in the community is noticed very quickly and is fair game for any or all of the locals to 'sort ye ut'. From my own experience, which echoes the words of my informants, I repeat this warning to anyone 'not in the ken'.

However, in giving this warning, I do not suggest that everyone in Hardtown is unfriendly, criminal or violent. Far from it, I met many lovely, honest, hard-working, law-abiding and upstanding individuals in Hardtown – as well as some who do not live by the fiscal or moral laws of normative society. After spending time in the community I would like to point out that, in their own way, they are no less honest and upstanding or trustworthy than any other cross-section of society.

The Hardtown earned the designation 'hard', not only from outsiders but also from the people living there. The notion of 'being hard' is a way of life into which all inhabitants are

<sup>77</sup> It is possible that the minorities have their own informal market but I found no direct evidence of this during my fieldwork.

<sup>78</sup> This image was confirmed by my own observations in the community: it was also substantiated and, one might almost say, cherished by the Hardtowners.

fostered from an early age. It is one of the most important attributes an individual and his/her family and social networks can have to acquire a high status in the community. For example, the highest hierarchical position is the local 'Hardman', a name which also suggests hardness is a valued commodity within the Hardtown community and the informal market.

Perhaps Hardtown is a tough neighbourhood: I found that their local ethos and way of life differed significantly from mainstream ideas of normative society, particularly on issues such as morality and crime. However, I also found that the people I worked with in Hardtown had their own interpretations of and ways of dealing with these issues, which they considered as normal or appropriate and worked just as well for them. It would therefore be wrong of me to adopt a superior air of righteousness about their perceived morality (or lack of morality) as these local values and notions are precisely what I am considering in this thesis.

Geographically, the Hardtown community lies close to the city center. Most houses in the area are council-owned flats but there are a few privately owned tenement blocks providing rented accommodation. There are as many as three community centres, a school and a haphazard collection of shops. The individuals living in the immediate neighbourhood mainly frequent the GRcc, where I carried out my fieldwork.

The community is divided along distinctive geographical, racial and socio-economic boundaries, where individuals from the same location, ethnicity and socio-economic stratum frequent the same community centre. People from neighbouring multi-storey blocks who frequent another community centre may well come from the same ethnic and socio-economic stratum but are regarded as rivals not friends.

A large percentage of the inhabitants in the Hardtown have seldom had the chance or the income to be able to leave the community, far less the country. This insularity may partly explain their ambivalence towards 'outsiders' or strangers.

The one-parent community is firmly integrated within Hardtown. This may draw its historical roots from the female heads of families during Dundee's industrial hey-day. The one-parents using the GRcc comprise two different groups, depending on whether or not they take part in the informal market. They also take an active part in the symbolic juxtaposition of joking violence that is an integral part of this community centre. Both of these activities are investigated in the following chapters (see Chapters 2, 3 and 5).

The ratio of one-parents in the Hardtown fluctuates, with new people moving in/out and variations in the birth and divorce rates<sup>79</sup>. In the 1991 census, there were approximately 300 one-parents within the Hardtown community<sup>80</sup>.

<sup>79</sup> Today, some of the Hardtown inhabitants seem to be part of what I would call the 'estate circle', which often moved between the different council estates. I found some families in the community, who had been there for at least one or two generations.

<sup>80</sup> Precise numbers are hard to calculate accurately, because the information given by most individuals in the community is rarely correct. I was told by many of my informants that no one gave the social services all of the information they asked: nor did they give the correct information, since the social services were viewed as the enemy. Many of my informants felt that the social service representatives looked down on them from their first interview, judging them by their clothes, speech and body language. These informants felt that, in the eyes of the social service agents, they were seen as low class and socio-economically inferior. These informants also held the widespread opinion that they had the right to try to get as much out of the state as possible, precisely because they had been treated as though they were without value and inferior. This latter opinion was not held or actively

The internal social divisions among the Hardtown one-parents were little different from those in the rest of this community. All were reliant on the same local socio-economic and moral values and, in particular, the strength of personal, family and social networks. The actual status of the individual within the internal hierarchy also depended on his/her aptitude in the verbal and physical violence and participation in the informal market, where reciprocity in exchanges reinforced the community's borders. This is discussed in depth in the following chapters.

The clothes, language and lifestyle of one-parents were little different from others in their age groups in the community. Almost like a uniform of identity, many of my informants wore the same shell suit, gym shoes and other clothes every season of the year and spent most of their money and time 'working' in the informal market to acquire good quality clothes and toys for their children, long before they thought of themselves. I knew many who had needed a winter coat for some time but never had the money for this expense. In similar vein, some of them made sure that their children had good, nutritious food, while they survived on leftovers and crisps. In these respects, they were no different from the one-parents I met who were in employment but also prioritised their lives in this way.

Historically, many in the community came from working class backgrounds, where their parents were once employed in Dundee factories as unskilled labour. Others came from different communities and may have had a more affluent, middle class upbringing but have ended up in Hardtown because of financial difficulties, often as a result of divorce.

Whatever their individual backgrounds, all are united in condemning the state's moral-political rhetoric, which stigmatised them as 'undeserving poor' because of their 'assumed' loose morals and sexual promiscuity. No one wanted to be seen or considered as '*one of those bad one-parents*' and all tried to separate themselves from any such inference. Nevertheless, the moral climate created by this political rhetoric has resulted in a feeling of disenfranchisement and an identification fragmentation within the community. Many voiced their concern of the futility of trying to redefine themselves or change society's perceptions of one-parents.

This is of particular relevance because of the state's coercive rhetoric and control of obstetric services, medication and it's ultimate weapon, the sectioning of unmarried mothers in mental institutions. This is of concern, not only for these one-parents, who insisted that all they were trying to do was make a good life for themselves and their children, but also for the whole of society. Through rhetoric and other means of coercion, the state can and will try to control individual sexual, moral, bodily, mental and linguistic development and corpus<sup>81</sup>.

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followed by all of my informants in the one-parent group, the GRcc or the community at large. I am only trying to give as broad an outline as possible of the one-parent community, their lives and some of their opinions in connection with the power dichotomy between them, as one stigmatised group within a larger stigmatised community, against the state that has stigmatised them.

<sup>81</sup> This is investigated in depth in the following chapters.

### *A closer look at the focal point of the study – the GRcc*

In Hardtown, there were three community centres frequented by individuals from the surrounding areas. Most only used their local centre but a few also went to one of the other centres if it catered for specific interests or groups. I undertook most of my fieldwork in one of these community centres, the GRcc.

The path taken by the community towards developing the GRcc started with a public meeting where the need for such a community facility in the Hardtown was first broached. In 1990s, the community undertook feasibility studies and housing security priorities. The Mind Tower Tenants' Association formed a subgroup, which further emphasised the need in the community for a youth drop-in club/café. A project leader of the community centre was appointed and was still there during my fieldwork. In accordance with the Centre's constitution, its function was to serve the community and all of the residents in the Hardtown.

Official figures recorded by centre staff between April 1998 and March 1999 showed that some 14,824 individuals visited the GRcc: this comprised approximately 7,608 adults, 4,206 youths and 3,010 children. Although my fieldwork and gathering of statistics ended in late 1999, the centre staff estimated a 7% increase in visitors from April 1999 to March 2000. All of these figures were based on approximations of the number of individuals taking part in the different groups, meetings and excursions at the centre.

The architectural structure of the GRcc is defined by its former use as a public house. During the course of my fieldwork, the centre was painted bright green in an attempt to make it more welcoming. Unless prior agreement had been made for the centre to be used on special occasions such as community fairs, it was only open on weekdays and closed at weekends.

Although Hardtown is a mixed community, the inhabitants of the few privately owned houses are not considered part of the community and did not frequent the GRcc. However, the community is often described, both internally and externally, as a poor council estate. The visual barrage of obvious signs of poverty and the image of prison bars on all of the windows and doors are further emphasised by the community's proximity to the economic hub and highlife of the city centre's shopping centre. This juxtaposition of poverty and wealth highlights the socio-economic stratification of Dundee in a very dramatic way. However, the proximity of the city centre made it very convenient for everyone involved in the informal market to acquire stolen goods and trade them soon after in the multi-storey buildings, which also served as the market place for drug trafficking.

The GRcc offered different kinds of help and entertainment for the area's inhabitants. This included evening groups for young children and teens in order to get them off the streets. The centre also provided subsidised outings for children and teens, for example, to the leisure centre or swimming pool. It also served as the venue for special interest groups, such as job-seekers, mothers and toddlers, one-parents and adult literacy.



## Summary

In this chapter, I have introduced the main fieldwork site for my thesis by describing and reviewing geographical, historical, statistical and other data about Dundee and Hardtown. In particular, I have given a brief account of Dundee's meteoric rise in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, its plateau in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, its gradual, painful decline ever since and the concomitant rise of impoverished communities, of which Hardtown is a prime example.

The present day socio-economical stratification in Dundee is highlighted by a direct comparison between the more affluent community of Broughty Ferry and the disadvantaged community of Hardtown.

I have underlined official attitudes towards the high proportion of women who were once employed in unskilled jobs in the factories but whose descendants and contemporary equivalents are now unemployed and unemployable. I have also drawn attention to the city's reputation as the home of 'tough' women, who were not afraid to make their feelings known in the factories or take their protests onto the streets, suggesting that such protests continue today in a less obvious manner.

I have concluded with a brief description of my first impressions of the Hardtown, its inhabitants and my main ethnographical area, the Gentleman Robber community centre.

Over the following chapters, I intend to offer images, facts and contextual notions to complement the geographical, historical, statistical and socio-economic data presented in this chapter. These chapters are concerned with contextual Hardtown notions of spatiality, work, morality, residential units and the informal market, in order to construct an in-depth image of this marginal community and its empowerment through resistance to enforced changes.

## **2 SPATIALITY - WHERE DO I BELONG OR WHERE DO I SIT?**

### **Introduction**

Narrowing the focus from the history of Dundee and the Hardtown, this chapter introduces the everyday spaces and experiences in the local environment of the GRcc. It describes, maps and analyses the internal power structures, networks and values of the GRcc, using local divisions embodied in and connected to Hardtown and the spatial dichotomies of its community centre.

Every day, Hardtowners face threats and exclusion from outside forces as well as internal ones. The fluctuating Hardtown process of contextual and individual notions of identity<sup>82</sup> is a problem that complicates access to local spaces - particularly as access to Hardtown spaces is linked to and through contextual identity and notions of status, power, inclusion, exclusion and morality.

The movement, malleability and status of the GRcc frequenters decide for example; at which table within the community centre you can sit and are considered to belong. The result is a power dichotomy expressed by my informants as: *Ye all ken wha someone is and wha others see them like ken, here like, by where di sit an all, and also by where di canna sit, ken!* This means that 'what you are depends on where you sit and vice versa'.

The spatial dichotomy used as an analytical tool within the thesis here takes the form of a fluctuating and fragmented crisis of local identification. This tool is used to describe and analyse the local fragmentation and divisions, internally as well as externally. This underlines the everyday power dichotomy among the GRcc clientele<sup>83</sup> and between the Hardtowners and the staff of the community centre<sup>84</sup>. This can also be used to describe the irreconcilable and entirely opposing housing situations of the staff and their clientele (a topic often raised by my informants). In general, the staff reside outside the community under much more affluent circumstances, while the GRcc frequenters live in: *Di fucking shi''y huses abut here. Wha ye never would find any of 'em. Yeah! Di all come in everyday like. But we canna leave!* I arrived at the concept of a local power struggle and spatial dichotomy by a process of assimilating the daily interplay and interchanges among my informants within the GRcc<sup>85</sup>.

<sup>82</sup> I found an individual disjointed process of identity, with (diverse) spaces within the community environment in the Hardtown populations' contact with both internal and external forces and threats. These contacts include other Dundee communities - their members, other Hardtowners' and external forces, such as community centre staff, social service staff, doctors, police and other outsiders.

<sup>83</sup> My own ambiguous status in the community ensured that both factions always treated me in the best possible way - at least until I started spending most of my time with the individuals that I had been warned away from by the staff. For a while, this put me in the strange 'in-between' category of not belonging to either camp. However by deciding to take a more active part in the joking, verbal, violent baiting, I moved closer towards becoming assimilated further into the community through the use of its ethos of violence. By moving further down this path, I became involved and aware of their local and individual (multiple) fragmentation. This fragmentation may be the price of a constant and multifaceted contesting of the spatial, social- economic and value domination found within the local area and, by extension, at a national level.

<sup>84</sup> Hardtowners considered that all members of the centre's staff were agents for the state.

<sup>85</sup> I found that the emphasis placed locally on spatial dichotomy and division was a manifestation of a power struggle between the external or internal individuals. Such divisions resulted in these individuals living, eating, experiencing and playing separately (often in contest or opposition) in the Hardtown, and especially within the environment of the community centre.

It is interesting to consider this notion of local spatial division from the differences in the status that the community centre staff and its frequenters attach to different groups and individuals as well as a manifestation of local hierarchy. It depicts the ongoing dichotomy between the internal and external forces, while also showing the internal fluctuating and fragmenting tension found in the everyday experience of my informants. This can be illustrated in their fights over local spaces, manifest as an individual and network power struggle over rights to, for example, the more attractive tables within the community centre.

By way of illustration, I found that the contextual concepts of spatiality weighed heavily on the Hardtowners' inclusion and acceptance in any action, relationships and interaction. The concept of space was not locally viewed as empty<sup>86</sup>; instead, it was seen as a space containing friends, enemies or both! Locally, this socially intrinsic means of ascription was valued and highly charged. In particular, it was a means of ascribing territory, identity, obligations and rights to the individuals within and via these localities.

The nominal status of certain tables within the community centre is determined by, for example, proximity to the entrance. The ability to sit facing the door is another key feature, as sitting with your back to the door can place you in danger<sup>87</sup>. Another important factor is the facility to leave as fast as possible or to escape to the WC to hide from the police and social security agents. It is important to be near the coffee shop, the pool table and the WC, as the frequenters consider them to be the main features of the GRcc. The size of the table is also considered to be essential, because the larger the table is the more of your faction or 'friends' can attend you. The angle of the table in relation to the security cameras is also important as it affects trading possibilities within the centre.

By comparison, the Andrew Dawson (1998:209) study shows a northern English mining community as a place with 'little opportunity for social mobility' and with an unquestionable spatial habit<sup>88</sup>. This is a spatial fixation which my Hardtown informants share (at least when other options are closed to them), but with a considerably less obvious or stable communal solidarity.

As in Dawson's (1998:209) study, many of my informants have an outlook that can make them seem 'isolated, geographically immobile<sup>89</sup> and [*some are when it will and do give them advantages*] localistic in outlook'<sup>90</sup>. However, I found that this immobility is negotiated and linked to the present moment in the Hardtown.

It is important<sup>91</sup> to recognise, even in the most fixed lifestyle or environment, the need and presence of transience or conflict. Thus this chapter's notion of spatial dichotomy tries to recognise and consider Hardtown ambivalence in the spatial and temporal movements.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Ingold.

<sup>87</sup> It is important to be able to see everyone who walks in, especially in case someone from a rival faction turns up.

<sup>88</sup> Both studies do find an environment where many locals (in Dawson's case the elderly – in my case most of the informants from a wide range of ages) were attending local clubs such as the ones within the GRcc.

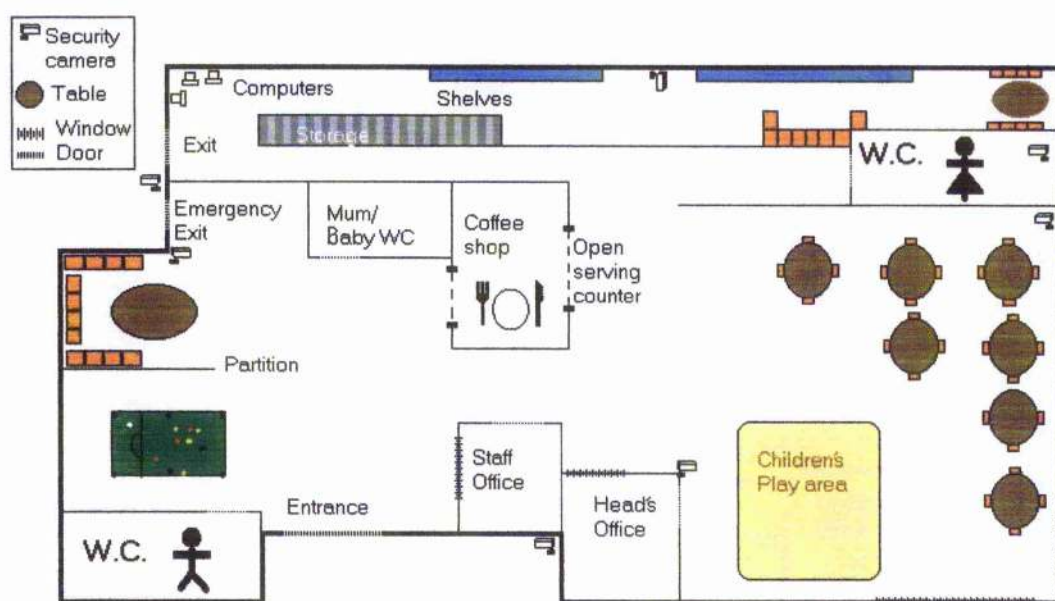
<sup>89</sup> In the Hardtown, there is some movement between council estates and some Hardtowners' do change meeting places depending on their monetary situation and a transient or temporal local status.

<sup>90</sup> My italics.

<sup>91</sup> Agreeing with Dawson (1998:219), I find it imperative to 'capture the ambivalence that is at the heart of most people's existence' even if some parts or actions of their lives seemed in part ensconced and described in or by fixity (cf. C 3; boredom).

I start with a map of the GRcc to help familiarise and visualise the structure of the community centre – with a brief description of the internal structure of the community centre. This is followed by an ethnographic visualisation of the community centre, its clientele and the activities that take place within, through several fragmented images. I then turn to a description and analytical interpretation of the divisions and stratifications within the GRcc, identifying the main frequenters and their process of internal stratification and division. To conclude the chapter, I give a description and analysis of the ongoing power dichotomy between staff and clientele within the community centre, using one of my main informant's experiences of spatial exclusion by the community centre staff.

### Map of community centre





### The community centre

The GRcc is built on the premises of a converted pub, which has lent it its distinguishing features. Architecturally, the building is a simple one-storey structure as shown on the above map.

The external and internal changes undertaken during the conversion of this public house into a community centre - such as the thick metal bars for windows and doors as well as an abundance of security cameras, both inside and outside the building - are contextually explained.

The main reason given by the community centre staff for these security features is the violent and criminal nature of the Hardtown community: *'This will function as security for both staff and frequenters as well as making sure that discontented individuals do not destroy the community centre property. We are protecting them from themselves.'*

The community centre functions within a community that embodies violence, both internally and externally. Most frequenters of the community centre express a positive view of violence<sup>92</sup>. However, my informants feel that the community centre staff neither understand nor empathize with the frequenters or their ethos of violence<sup>93</sup>. This has led to a situation where daily controversy, tension and friction exist between GRcc staff and frequenters. Furthermore, during my fieldwork, these circumstances led to an escalation in the resentment felt against the staff's behaviour by the frequenters, who took exception to any disregard<sup>94</sup> of their local views and notions.

I found that a mutual suspicion and lack of trust between GRcc staff and frequenters was rife within the Hardtown community. This situation was not improved by a display of pre-emptive security precautions by GRcc staff (cf. p 53). These precautions were felt to represent and mirror a (conscious and unconscious) suspicion by the staff against the Hardtown frequenters. This resulted in fragmentation and alienation, on both an individual and a group basis, to threats from internal (other frequenters) and external (community centre staff, police, doctors, etc.) sources. I found that this suspicion also included 'outside' values and opinions imbued by mainstream rhetoric and any political or moral discourse that describes the frequenters as immoral and criminal.

In the Hardtown, I found that forces, agents and institutions associated with the long term are viewed with suspicion - due to their links with mainstream society. My informants consider the external and mainstream as a means for and manifestation of social control and as agents for the state. This is felt to validate the Hardtown notions of living and working in the 'atemporal' informal market economy (Day, Papataxiarchis and Stewart, 1999:21).

<sup>92</sup> I also found that much of my informants' daily behaviour reflected an ethos of violence.

<sup>93</sup> This consideration is derived from the opinions and experiences of both staff and informants, collected through several years of participant observation.

<sup>94</sup> Many of my informants interpreted staff disregard as an infringement and disrespect of their rights and opinions as individuals as well as frequenters of the GRcc.

### Description of the community centre

The community centre is a single-storey building, set slightly above street level. The overwhelming initial impression is that security must be an important consideration – all of the windows are heavily barred, the entry is well fenced and there is a security camera pointing towards the doorway. Opening the front door, you enter a small corridor, which has a wall to the left and the administration office to the immediate right. This office, which is 'home' to an administrative staff of five, is made from reinforced glass<sup>95</sup> and there is a small window for enquiries<sup>96</sup>. The general opinion expressed by the frequenters of the community centre is that all members of the administrative staff use these large windows and the security cameras to 'spy' on them. They also suspect the staff of noting every action, trading, movement and conversation going on within the community centre and of reporting these to the police and social services. This suspicion has led to all frequenters adopting an exaggeratedly careful attitude when it comes to any sort of interaction within the community centre – for example, any gifts or trades are exchanged under the tables, hidden from watchful eyes.

To the left of the entrance is the Gentlemen's WC, the pool table and, in the far corner, a large round table surrounded by chairs. The latter is one of the most popular and prestigious tables within the community centre and is where most of the people I 'hung out with' spend most of their time. The use of this table – and the individuals allowed to sit around it – was an issue for continued spatial disputes between the staff and my informants. The prominence of this space is highly important for the frequenters as it is the most visible table as well as the first you see as you walk into the community centre. (First impressions count.) At this corner table people often hold meetings (like the job club on Mondays) and many of the community centre's frequenters have their lunch there while talking to other regulars.

Directly across from the entrance is a changing room for mothers and babies, adjacent to an emergency exit door above which is a security camera that covers the whole area around the entrance. To the right of the changing room is one of the counters of the coffee shop, which has a permanent staff of two and part-time help at times from different adolescents from the centre's group for troubled teenagers.

The coffee shop offers a range of different daily, inexpensive, but nutritious, dishes. It also offers items such as crisps, sweets and drinks including the main sustenance for most of my informants and a strong help in my assimilation into the community: tea. Many of the regular visitors to the centre spend most of their time in the centre starting from breakfast at 11.00 until the kids come out of school at 15.00. They take most of their meals with the same group of individuals that attend the community centre every day. Many of my informants take their children for their meals at the centre as they believe it is cheaper to buy their food pre-cooked here than to make it themselves<sup>97</sup>.

<sup>95</sup> My informants thought that this allowed the staff a better overall view of any movement, discussions or actions taking place within the centre.

<sup>96</sup> There are two females and one male working in this office as designated centre administrative personnel. Some additional part-time staff members also use this office. The individuals present on different days depend on the club or workshop planned for that day.

<sup>97</sup> This opinion may be due to the encouragement of the staff. For example; during most single parent meetings I found that the community centre staff were 'enlightening' the group members that the centre's food is not only cheaper but almost certainly more nutritious than what they were likely to cook for themselves. I found that many parents bring any under school age children with them in the morning. Most children that attend school come to meet their parents when the school day is finished.

The corridor between the coffee shop and the administration office leads to the other main general area of the community centre. This is a large room that contains several tables, a TV, stereo and has newspapers, pamphlets and some books available for use. To the right of this room is the corner office of the woman in charge of the community centre and 'lovingly' referred to as 'Iron Balls' by the regulars. In front of her office is the area used for the children's crèche in the late afternoon and evenings. There are iron-barred windows on the right side of the room and two security cameras covering the whole of the room.

Turning left from the corridor, you find another counter of the coffee shop. In the far left corner of the room is a table that was used for meetings of the job club for a long time.

Between this table and the coffee shop is a corridor leading either right to the Ladies' WC or left to the coffee shop kitchen, staff entrance and storage rooms. A security camera monitors the inside of the Ladies' WC, while other security cameras monitor the access corridor and staff entrance, inside and outside.

Adjacent to the staff entrance is the community centre's computer room, comprising three computers and a printer, used by the staff and frequenters. This room continues into a long, narrow space where most of the community centre's regular groups meet and work, including the one-parent group I attended every Thursday. Another security camera monitors this room. This space is reserved only for active participants within the community centre and has been especially segregated from all other areas - creating a spatial inclusion and exclusion based on active group identification.

### **Fragmented scenes - snapshots from a stranger's view of the community centre**

Everyone is here today so this meeting must be one of the good ones. Everybody shows up if it is bingo, an excursion or something else that is free and fun! Well, this is after all the main entertainment for everyone in the one-parent group. Apart from the activities that take place at the group meetings their life is as they say; rather monotonous and boring. Because of a daily shortage of money and time no one actually ever does anything new or exciting outside the normal parameters of everyday life. Everyday activities consist of picking up their giro, going to the social service office, attending the community centre, cooking and taking care of the children.

Everyone in the group is presently unemployed and only two of them have ever had employment of any kind. This is their life, to sit here during the day and *hash* over what is going on in the neighbourhood and in their own lives. The hardest thing for most of them to face is (as they say) another day of gruelling boredom! Therefore many feel that the one-parent meetings and the community centre are their only escape from boredom: apart, that is, from illegal or prescribed drugs.

It is a great group of women though, and to think that I was so intimidated by them all at the start!

Walking into the community centre you face either friendly shouts to come over and take your place at the table where your friends sit or a barrage of silent stares, depending on whether or not you are known within the community centre.

Around the pool table you usually find the men who frequent the community centre or Diana who spends a lot of time playing pool and squaring up, both to the men and some of the other women. Within the confines of the centre, different groups take their place at their own table and start their daily participation in a performance and play of violence, the baiting and berating of other pool players and visitors coming through the front door (cf. the Hardtown semantics and glossary in Appendix 3).

*Sandra – Pow! You know on a typical day at the community centre one could jokingly assume that the general dress code was (if one actually existed) a shell suit and trainers. Watch all the tinkies: Oh yes! Here you see our fine model her shell suit is either Kappa, Addidas, Nike or any other such brand. The trainers are either the cheapest possible brand or the most high-techs. I guess that depends on your contacts within the informal market. Hee, hee.*

Pausing to have a quick look around me, it does seem that most individuals have a preference for the Kappa brand. This distinctive apparel is worn equally by both genders. Within the more affluent areas of Dundee, people refer to communities such as Hardtown with scornful comments such as: 'Dundee sponsored by Kappa'.

The first impressions you make on others are important within the community. Most of the men and women usually don the same style of clothing; have the same haircuts and masses of jewellery. The body language of the Hardtown individuals is very important for the way they are perceived (especially within the confines of the community) and many adopt a constant haughty air of aggressive superiority and cheeky in-your-face obstinacy.

We were all sitting around the round corner table next to the pool table as usual; keeping an eye out for friends and strangers; talking while at the same time checking out who was walking in or out the entrance and with whom.

Most of the usual crowd that attend the community centre in the morning were sitting around sipping their tea. It always amazed me how long they could stretch a pot of tea. We would usually get two pots out of the first one we bought - especially if everyone was short of money, which everyone was most of the time. In the end, the tea might be a bit watery, but it was still something warming and filling to drink.

*Diana – Po! Are ye here already mate! Eh dinna ken wha ye come in so early, like. Nea one will be here before 11, di need to sort di bairns out, like.*

I was sitting listening to the girls talking and complaining in the usual intimate little clusters about men, money and much else. I myself became caught up in a conversation with Jane (a fact that was briefly commented on by Diana who was talking with everyone or rather airing her bold ideas on everything to everyone.)

When I arrived around 11.15 there were about 8 people sitting around the table just watching the door, sipping tea and exchanging the occasional comments. Of the usual group around our table most of us were already present: Jane, Diana, Sara 1, Marie (Sara's daughter), and her youngest child, Carl (Marie's man), Sara 2, Delilah, and Ellen were all present. I was surprised to see Sara 1, Marie and Carl at our table, as they usually do not turn up until after one.



Looking at the rather drawn and pasty faces of most of my Hardtown friends around the table, I consider the more tidy apparel of Viola. She and some of the other girls from the one-parent group seem to spend more time talking about and putting on make-up, upmarket clothes (Gentleman Robber style) and perfume than other individuals within the community centre.

*Viola – Po di ye see that di young slappers think di can look as good as us. Well di dinna have a chance, like. Eh have class, di there are just withou a clue, like.*

Most of the staff are sitting around in the office and are preoccupied with things out of our view. Their eyes seem to follow us around the rooms with the help of the community centre's security cameras. Lisa, the youngest female member of staff at the community centre, just walked up to Henry (the chef) in the coffee shop, to order some lunch. Well, I assume that she is. She always does it rather like clockwork at the same time every day. She always looks so trendy, well fed and clean. I tell the girls I am off to the WC and that I will get another pot of tea on the way back.

*Jane – Yeah girl gi us a nother cup an all, Zoe is coming out wi her fellow. Oh! Diya have enough, like. Can ye manage like or if ye canne eh will sub ye like. Es nea fair tha we all pay and di there newcomers dinna. Gi some more suger and milk too, ken*

While I stand at the counter waiting for the pot of tea, I find myself thinking that the main difference between the staff and the frequenters is the general lack of hygiene<sup>98</sup> of the Hardtown centre's frequenters. The higher quality of clothes and jewellery worn by the staff is something else that separates the two groups.

*Diana – Po! Po! What the fuck is tha ma'er with ye girl? The pot is done, gi it and gi yer arse moving like!!*

All around me I see earlobes bejewelled by gold hoops from one end to another, top to bottom, and a multitude of gold chains and pendants and hands covered with a mass of gold rings enough for a tribal wedding outfit. When I say all, I really mean that everyone around me, including small children, has pierced ears, with gold loops and everyone wearing as much gold jewellery as is financially possible<sup>99</sup>. It seems the only difference between men and women, when it comes to wearing earrings, is that the men have only a single thick gold hoop in each ear. In general, the men keep their hair very short; a haircut that could be described as a crew cut or an all over shave with a number one to three.

However bright their ornaments, they do not manage to overcome the unwashed hair and the drawn and pasty faces of Diana and Jane. Even in a community that puts a lot of emphasis on wearing a lot of gold<sup>100</sup>, these two wear more gold jewellery than most. I know that the gold jewellery bedecking the ears, hands and necks of Jane and Diana comes partly from Diana's close contacts with the illegal drug side of the informal market and her connections to several of the community's Hardmen (i.e. her brothers).

<sup>98</sup> On the whole, they have dirty clothes, smelly bodies and a generally unkempt air.

<sup>99</sup> I found that this gold was often pawned in times of financial need.

<sup>100</sup> Stolen gold jewellery (traded within the informal market) is considered as a status symbol that shows your skill as a thief as well as your attractiveness to others. This as gold jewellery is often given as courting gifts during short or long sexual relationships.

*Diana – eh am well pissed off. Di there fuckers from di centre ha stolen our table again. I mean, di ha eh whole centre and where do di decide to ha their stupid club, like!*

In the other room, the job club is holding a meeting. As usual Helen, the club leader and one of the women from the one-parent group cut out ads from today's paper then post them on the club's wall in the centre. Helen belongs to a section within the community centre that spends more time trying to get work than participating in our usual daily gossiping around the coffee shop. She is seen as an 'outsider' by most of the other frequenters of the centre and our group view her as: *a fucking snob who thinks she is all that!* Diana, Jane, Sara and most others within that faction really dislike her. This aversion is mutual; Helen has warned me on many occasions to avoid the bad crowd at the community centre. If I took heed of her warnings, I would, unfortunately, end up avoiding the majority of the centre's clientele.

Many of the women in our one-parent group feel that Helen always tries to make out that she is better than the rest in the group at the centre. Unlike others in the community, she always tries to take over the leadership of the group when none of our real leaders are there. Most regulars generally interpret this as an inclination for her to ally herself with the centre's staff and so in opposition to the other frequenters. Such behaviour in the face of the problems between staff and clientele further emphasises Helen's separateness from the others within the centre and the one-parent group. The women in the group also told me that it is not only her attempt to assume leadership or her alliance with the staff that separates her from the main GRcc frequenters. Her attempts to further her education (via night school and courses at the centre) as well as her inclination to try and dress in similar style as the centre's staff, annoys the other frequenters. Diana tells me that Helen's behaviour affects her becoming a part of the single parent group and other groups within the centre. Her superior 'I am better than thou' attitude<sup>101</sup> towards almost everyone else in the centre, further seem to infuriate and irritate the others in the centre and the group.

Many members seem aware that Helen and the staff view the frequenters as divided into several distinct groups. However, they still express a feeling that at least the majority of the frequenters (or as the staff would say different groups), do not look down on the main way of life within the centre. They feel that life on the giro-wage (cf. Chapter 5) is something that Helen seems to view with disdain. It seems that those who frequent the job club are viewed at times within the centre with different degrees of scorn, ridicule and envy as they have turned their back on the fast money and access to commodities within the Hardtown informal market.

*Diana – Eh dinna ken wha di go to di club ken. Eh used to go mind ye, but eh dinna gi a job, like. Helen is a right stuck up cow diye nea think, she thinks she will gi one right as rain.*

The kids' crèche is held in the same room as, but in the opposite corner from, the job club. The crèche is organised and paid for by the community centre. It employs several women and a man who work within the different age groups. The community centre organises activities for different ages of children and teenagers. In some instances, teenagers in trouble (i.e. expelled from school) are encouraged to take part in child minding and in activities to entertain younger children. Everyone in our group and most within the centre leave their children at crèches or let them take part in the other activities for children or teenagers.

<sup>101</sup> This attitude is compounded by Helen's nationality (she is English), together the fact that she thinks she will get a job, while many of the others seem to have given up this hope.

*Violet – di crèche is great ken, eh take di bairns out swimming, party and mind them nea getting in trouble, like.*

*Diana – Eh yer right there great mind ye, but my lad is ge''in too big soon, like. But di gi them in for free or cheep like to do things tha we couldnea afford, like.*

Everyone feels that this club benefits all as it gives the women and men frequenting the centre time to spend at the centre's adult groups or clubs. The club has further benefits, for example running errands, cleaning and cooking – all for a very reasonable sum. The local spatial divisions within the centre, which normally separate the different groups, seem to dissolve somewhat and loosen up when it comes to the use of the activity groups and clubs geared towards teenagers and children.

*Jane – Po! We are off home now, like. Eh will see ye abut 11 tomorrow, like.*

The early bird catches the worm! Not that I have a fondness for worms. Nor does this imply that an early riser would gain some preferred or positive position within the centre. On the contrary, early attendance at the centre would definitely not lead to a better or higher position or inclusion in a group within the centre; nor would it bring any status-related advantages. Instead, this would attract an air of suspicion with regard to your actions and spatial placement, adding further confusion to where you belong within the different local community centre divisions and tables. Whenever I turned up earlier than most of the other adults in the one-parent group or at the centre, it just seemed to get me into all sorts of trouble.

*Diana – Po! Po! Wha the fuck are ye si''ing over there for? Gi yer arse over here speedy like.*

On one occasion, Diana and Jane came into the room as I was sitting with some of the pensioners who frequent the community centre during the morning, keeping them company while taking part in some general chitchat as they ate their breakfast. I cannot really say that I knew any of the pensioners at my table and only actually ended up sharing the table because I happened to sit at their usual breakfast table before they had arrived. Watching them appear, I found that they seemed to turn up in clusters of two to four (men or women) who descended on me as I sat and had my own breakfast. This lovely old lady with a funny multicoloured knitted hat and a rather worn thick coat first approached me, asking if they could join me at the table. Until that moment, I had not realised that I had actually disrupted any of the normal seating arrangements encountered during the morning. I had not considered (short sightedly) that the early morning frequenting pensioners would probably similarly mirror the spatial divisions present during the day within the other adult clientele.

I turned around and noticed that Diana and Jane had just walked through the door. I called out their names and asked them to join us. At first, they ignored me – by trying to pretend that they had not heard me call their names. I did not catch on and continued to call them, until they were seated at our usual table in the corner by the pool table whence they (in sharp tones) called me over. *Po! Come here!*

I left my things at the table and walked over to our usual table, worrying that they had fallen out with me and thinking that I had perhaps broken some rule the day before without realising it. As I approached the table, Jane left and I was left there with Diana. She just looked at me and seemed really angry with me. She smiled tightly and said: *Dimm'a ye ken tha it's nae*



*e bra idea to sit over tha with di others, ken. If di is apart of our group di bra group like. Es ye is ken. Di should nae move about or di could mess tha up. Ye look like ye is turning di back on us like. Jane and eh would nae sit there like. Di there are not apart ow our group like and if ye or me like dinna stop si'ing about all over tha place at any table like. Di others in the group would go spare like! Thinking tha wi dinn'a ken were wi belong like and tha wi dinna care nea more. Nea giving them nea respect ken. So dinna sit wie others and nea a' another table, like. Sit wi the ones ye should sit wi, ken. And Po never fucking call us about like tha ken<sup>102</sup>.*

## **My introduction to the GRcc**

### **Setting**

The GRcc is placed half way up the street below the high rises. The community centre's front entrance faces a row of gloomy, likewise iron-barred, shops and a small road leading up to the Hardtown community's school. The GRcc is an ungainly and visually insignificant building, which does not contribute any direct visual or affirmative attributes of hope or beauty to the infrastructure of the community - apart from its bright colour.

The stale and pungent air, which assaults anyone that walks into or through the community, might lull one into a false sense of security. The oppressive silence seems to distract many unknowing visitors creating an image of a community based on a secure position and identity even in its daily poverty.

Entering this silent and seemingly stagnant community, some might assume that it is still and quietly resigned within all of its areas or spaces. Mistaking the general surface of stillness and stagnation for satisfaction and acceptance of its stigmatisation as a social, economical and political marginal area under the common banner of undeserving. To the undiscerning observer, this would result in a false image of the community as secure within its marginality. Such an image would miss out the important intervals of (liminal) periods of daily tension and violent power struggle constantly creating a community in an identification flux and fragmentation. None of the individuals (or groups) within Hardtown identify with nor ascribe to the normative society or its values. On the other hand, Hardtowners do not fully ascribe to the idea that they belong to a marginal community of undeserving outsiders - unless this can be used for their own gain, as in benefit fraud.

Hiding within the security of being an 'accepted' outsider, I found a community in a state of emotional, social and economic flux. The behaviour of many Hardtowners suggested that they themselves did not know where they belonged as individuals. Instead, many of my informants tended to spread their notions of self, identity and identification among multiple groups and ideas. None seemed to fully subscribe to any one specific group or idea and they always managed to give the impression that they felt alone, fragmented and insecure - even at the most personal and intimate level

Walking through the Hardtown community is a depressing experience. There are no sights of natural beauty such as a river, forest or flowers (even plants) that could be used as a focus or image of the community's soul. Instead, the empty eyes of derelict buildings, the

<sup>102</sup> Feeling both frightened and relieved that this was their only response and that I was not more physically reprimanded, I took the advice to heart. I had at least learnt something from my mistake.



toothless grins of burnt out cars, the pungent smells and oppressive silence assault the senses. This is clearly a spirit and community that has lost all hope.

### Security

The eyes and faces of all age groups in the community spell out poverty and a lack of hope. The oppressive influence and overpowering presence of thick dark iron bars, fences and security cameras, which dominate the community, often had me wondering: are they designed to keep something or someone out or in? After the ideas expressed by the community centre staff, one might assume that the dominating and oppressing presence of these security measures in the community was meant to convey a sense of safety - but to whom and against whom?

The anaesthetised feeling of security conveyed by an oppressive silence and the many security measures perhaps lulls the stranger into false acceptance, not recognising that this masks a tension within a slow emergence of fragmentation and an ethos of violence. There is a widespread confusion of identity within the community and individual Hardtowners, lacking hope and at times doubting their own self-worth, contributed to this local fragmentation and violence. The continuous contesting and subversion against the domination of Hardtown by outside forces further complicate this situation<sup>103</sup>.

### Urbanity and its initial spatial complexity

The Hardtown community centre is the place where I undertook the main part of my fieldwork. This community centre was originally intended for the use of the individuals in the immediate neighbourhood only as the Hardtown had two other community centres for occupants from other parts of the community.

In this community, as in other urban communities, most people can and will, more often than not, try to avoid you. Moreover, they will steer clear of communicating with you or even acknowledging your presence – unless they are predisposed to want to do so and, from my own experience (believe me), most individuals prefer not to.

Within the confines of the Hardtown urban post-industrial society, I find the notion of personal space is expressed and viewed, by my informants, as a space that is fully inclusive and excludes others. For example, most Hardtown individuals rarely invite strangers into this space of personal sacredness and you can do precious little to influence this. Assimilation into the community might eventually lead to the periodic and sporadic inclusion into a few such private realms. However, even if you were born in or had been assimilated into this community, you will still experience exclusion from this private space – not because you are a stranger, but because any inclusion on a regular basis would not follow the local customs. The local distinctions and voids dividing the official and private are sharp and deep. These borders

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<sup>103</sup> In the Hardtown, an outsider is seen as anyone who does not live in the community or an individual who may live in the community but is not a part of any of the local networks. I found that external forces, institutions and agents, such as doctors, social services, the government, police and community centre staff, are also seen and defined as outsiders.

are further emphasised by the community's insecurity and fragmentation, linked for example to a fear of being informed on<sup>104</sup>.

So, even if you do try to camp out on a Hardtown doorstep<sup>105</sup>, you will not find the private space a suitable place for daily research. The dichotomy separating the private and official realms of our modern urban society, coupled with the unstable structures<sup>106</sup> of the Hardtown, created a situation and spatial division defined by problems when undertaking any studies within this community.

### ***Spatiality in the light of new arrivals***

When I first walked into the community centre, I faced (like any other newcomer) not only inquiring looks but also hard stares of animosity. At a later stage of my fieldwork, I found that this was the normal reaction to strangers or outsiders coming into the community centre. If the individual is not recognized as belonging either within the community or the centre, they are met initially with hard stares of an aggressive nature. At the same time, they are treated to meaningful and continuous silence.

During what my informants interpret as a stranger's intrusion into their space, a tight surveillance of the visitor is warranted. It is vital to keep an eye on these strangers, as they may try to steal from you or perhaps start a fight; both of which are actions that might challenge (by a conscious or unconscious act) their own or your position within the centre. Moreover, the GRcc regulars might also use this as an opportunity to steal from the visitors or fight them to try to enhance their own status. Many also tried to frighten and intimidate new, would-be frequenters or a visitor, by placing them in a spatial no man's land. As strangers, they do not belong and have no place within the centre. This also helps to clarify and emphasise to any stranger those who belong and own this space and the respective community centre tables.

Arriving in the Hardtown and the GRcc for the first time, a stranger may also face a number of different actions or reactions from the locals. This is determined by factors such as: the day and time of the stranger's arrival, his/her behaviour<sup>107</sup> and who else is present at that time. All of these can determine the mode of behaviour and the level of aggression from the locals.

Provided the stranger makes no aggressive overtures and does not know anyone within the community<sup>108</sup> he/she will be stared at and then superficially ignored. However, it is also highly probable that he/she may have to face some verbal or physical violence on their way out of the community centre. The sanctions or consequences that such a stranger would have to face depend on the actual and body language of the said individual within the community centre. It is important to note that the people within the community centre or in the Hardtown

<sup>104</sup> This is something that may result in a local and individual position of fear, suspicion and violence (cf. culture of suspicion in chapter 4).

<sup>105</sup> This would probably lead to your exclusion from all forms of communication and under some circumstances this might also lead to the authorities being contacted.

<sup>106</sup> The social, economical, political and identifying structure of the Hardtown is fragmented and fluctuating.

<sup>107</sup> Any behaviour from the stranger's (whether of a physical or verbal, conscious or unconscious nature) will result in a range of different corresponding behaviours from the regular frequenters within the community centre.

<sup>108</sup> That is to say if no one took them there or meets them there.

community generally may view and interpret aggressive behaviour, irritation or an obvious weakness differently from mainstream ideas.

Behaviour that would be considered normal within most mainstream areas of society can be interpreted as opposing and disrespecting the Hardtown internal notions and therefore viewed as a threat. This would result in any individual displaying this behaviour being subsequently punished. For instance, any stranger simply walking in the community or into the community centre is considered and interpreted to have violated the community's boundaries. This can be viewed as something that both threatens and opposes the individual and local power hierarchy inside the community, as well as their highly divided and structured relation to outside communities - which are normally based on deterring violence.

I found that the frequenters seem to place a high value on determining, dividing and defending their space from outsiders. This is due to the restricted allocation of Hardtown space, together with its individual and local identification, fragmentation and exclusion from mainstream 'normative' society. In a community facing such adamant fragmentation as the Hardtown, the presence of a stranger is always a threat to their own identification process as well as an element that temporarily creates a notion of togetherness.

I was warned on several occasions that there were certain ways to ensure that you would be robbed or attacked. The most way obvious way was, for example, to dress differently from the individuals at the centre (particularly in a more affluent manner), sport brand name clothing (which would be attractive to steal) or to have an elegant wallet (creating the image of money). Other key indicators were to walk 'like ye thought ye was something' or to look and behave in a weak manner (not talking back or sounding frightened). All of these factors would combine to give an impression of affluence, employment and difference - working as an irritant and aggressive accelerant to the community's members as it emphasised what they did not have, while also displaying what they felt excluded from. Paradoxically, these perceived differences provide an identification or link to the rest of mainstream society.

The initial reaction to me<sup>109</sup> by the one-parent group as well as the rest of the individuals frequenting the community centre tables followed the process described above.

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<sup>109</sup> Through my introduction by an individual who already was known within the centre (even if she was seen as staff, thus an outsider) I was placed within their common space as more than a mere unknown and unaffiliated stranger. It placed me in a position where I could start to get to know all the members of the one-parent group that met in the back room of the community centre every Thursday. This allowed me to find out that several of the single parent members of the group were frequent visitors to the centre. In developing the acquaintance of these women, I became part of the segment of the community that frequented the Gentleman Robber on a daily basis, spending time around one of the more prestigious tables. This introduced me to the life experiences of the one-parent group and to the other individuals within the GRcc and the Hardtown.

### *Identifying the main frequenters and their processes of internal stratification and division.*

To extend and map the processes of power dichotomy within the community centre and its place within the Hardtown community, I use further division and stratification within six locally conceptualised levels. These six areas of local division and stratification further emphasise the fragmented identification process and emotional security found at Diana's table at the GRcc, in the one-parent group and within the Hardtown community generally.

#### *Employment and labour*

The first of these six tools for defining local inclusion and exclusion is the past and present employment status of my informants. It accords with the importance placed on this particular socio-economic division for stratification, both within general society and within the Hardtown community. It also differentiates whether the individual can be contextually placed and interpreted as working class (was now or had previously been in employment) or part of the giro-wage class<sup>110</sup> (cf. Chapter 5).

By visualising Great Britain as a society based on a notion of capitalist commodity structures of socio-economic value, I find a social process through which the worker is (or can be) perceived as a commodity to be brokered (Ralph Grillo, 1999). I find that the long-term unemployment visualised within the post-industrial Hardtown has, for example, created a general feeling, within the unemployed, of exclusion and separation from a former social and economic hierarchical structure<sup>111</sup>. It also indicated a feeling of general societal marginality, giving the undeserving no value as a commodity on the labour market and reducing them in this manner to insignificant and invisible social individuals within a capitalist commodity ruled state. This situation may develop into an 'anti-economic' and 'atemporal' stance of opposition and fear of the mainstream notions of work-identity as encountered within the Hardtown community (Day, Papataxiarchis and Stewart, 1999:1-25).

The tools of division<sup>112</sup> I used to separate the frequenters to the community centre are a simplified version of the different means of identification and status designation encountered during my fieldwork at the GRcc. The Hardtown individual and community based processes, their use, functions and connections embody a strong feeling of fragmentation. This fragmentation is felt strongly, both on an individual and collective (e.g. one-parent group) basis, and leads to problems of identification and separation as well as inclusion at both internal and external levels<sup>113</sup>.

<sup>110</sup> Living on social benefits for more than 10 years.

<sup>111</sup> The Hardtown informants expressed a view of employment, productivity or labour activities as supporting mainstream society, linking it to production and conventional normative morals and values. Thus notions of mainstream occupations or wage elites was felt to create a process of exclusion for the individuals living within the poor council estate in the Hardtown, which had a socio-economic structure based mainly within the giro-wage class (cf. Chapter 5).

<sup>112</sup> The six tools are: employment and labour, age grades, gender, participation in centre activities, money and family networks.

<sup>113</sup> In the Hardtown urban environment, I find a concept of identity that goes even further than Epstein's (1978) notion of a synthesis identity. It here represents a temporarily coherent, yet paradoxically incoherent and disjointed notion of identity, dependent on the concept of what the Hardtowners' needed to be (for security and financial gain) at that particular time.



Most of the GRcc's frequenters originate from within the giro-wage class, but I found a marginal participation by working class individuals in some activities of the GRcc, such as outside fairs. I use the divisions encountered in my study of the interactions taking place around Diana's table and in the one-parent group to clarify the local nuances of these distinctions. This adequately exemplifies the individual as well as collective stratification, interactions and division within the community centre<sup>114</sup>.

During the last ten years, only two of the fifteen members of the one-parent group have been in legal employment. At the time of inquiry, Viola, a mother of two, had been in part-time employment as a dishwasher at a pub for a month and a half. She also sold cosmetics for a door-to-door cosmetics firm. Viola later gave up the part-time employment because her travel from and to work was too time-consuming and took her too far way from the community and her friends and family. Viola also felt that her salary was too insignificant to make any real difference to her overall finances and that her immediate need for the employment had ceased<sup>115</sup>.

Diana, one of my main informants, was the second individual in the one-parent group who had been in employment. During the last ten years, Diana had initially worked for one of the big factories in Dundee (until it closed down), and then re-trained as a chef. The pride in Diana's voice shone through as she talked of her job as a chef. Towards the end of these conversations, she often assured me that she still was looking for employment. However, determining exactly how long she had been unemployed has proved difficult as her recollections of this matter were sketchy and did also differ widely at times. Her stories generally indicated the period of unemployment to be between six to ten years.

My study showed that most of the women in the one-parent group had not been in employment during the last ten years. In addition, most of the members of the one-parent group had never been in any form of employment. All of them were then recipients of social benefits. In theory, this rendered the overwhelming majority within the one-parent group as individuals firmly entrenched within the giro-wage class. This observation, together with similar trends found by observation (listening to gossip and tales) undertaken at Diana's table at the GRcc, subsequently highlights that the majority of its clientele belong mainly, if not solely at that time, to the giro class. This results in the inclusion of minimal infraction from working class (legal) individuals from both the one-parent group and the community centre within this thesis.

This particular observation and its interpretation should not necessarily be used and superimposed as a tool of division or stratification of the whole of the Hardtown community. I drew this conclusion for several specific reasons, and within a specific environment (spatial divisions), which might infringe on such a process.

Firstly, I found that people from the Hardtown community but who were themselves non-frequenters of the community centre distinguished and identified the GRcc as a place frequented by marginal groups and individuals within their community. They characterised the community centre as a place where the socio-economically failed and undeserving from their community met each other – the socially and economically destitute, the unemployed and drug

<sup>114</sup> I feel confident about using this tool of division by countless observations and comparisons, which taken together indicated that the structure and composition (working class or giro class) of the community centre and the one parent group closely resembled each other.

<sup>115</sup> She had only taken the job as a temporary measure to pay for her children's Christmas presents.

addicts. This characterisation thus prevented any working-class individuals from frequenting the community centre lest they were themselves identified as belonging to the 'idle and feckless' from the giro-wage class (Howe, 1990:2-3).

Secondly, I found that individuals within the socio-marginal parts of the community equally recognized their exclusion from the mainstream social structure and their supposed place in society. They saw their 'unworthiness' as a temporary tool for financial improvement (via the giro-wage and the informal market) and as supporting their right and claim to space within the community centre.

Many of the community centre's regulars will accordingly react aggressively *en masse* if they feel their spatial boundaries are being threatened<sup>116</sup>. They use their inclusive configuration of their undeserving and marginal status within the community centre as a vital part of their individual survival within an otherwise excluded position – politically, socially, economically and morally.

*The others would take over our place like.*

*Ken di others di 'nna come here. Di have a few boab and di 'nna want to.*

Their tool of reifying their 'otherness' and undeservingness into a valuable tool often leads to an opposing and negative evaluation of the mainstream institutions, values and social processes. They consider all normal social values as a threat - while asking themselves why they should become involved in 'the mindless drudgery of "straight" jobs' (S Day, 1999:137) (cf. Chapter 5).

Thirdly, I felt that the limited number of working-class individuals who frequented the community centre gave an insubstantial foundation for any study into the stratifications of the Hardtown blue-collar community. As the information needed for such a study was not available within the parameters of the community centre it was impossible to create a complete image of the Hardtown division and stratification on all levels and within all strata.

### Age grades

The second tool of division I use is that of Age grades as I found that an individual's age influenced one's position within the Hardtown power structure. The local stratification and division, effecting communication, trade, identity and spatial status encountered within the community centre as well as within the one-parent group, mirror this. I found that the time and space allocated to a particular age grade within the community centre constituted both a means of localised spatial inclusion and exclusion<sup>117</sup>.

The age of the individuals frequenting the community centre clearly connects them within certain strata and clearly excludes them from the company and access of others. Age is considered an important part of the local stratification, which partially determines individual access to commodities, information networks and to a table with high status in the GRcc. This

<sup>116</sup> A threat could be seen as someone sitting at their table or walking into their community.

<sup>117</sup> There are circumstances that change or remove the importance of age for space, work and affiliation inclusion, such as, pregnancy, etc. (cf. Chapter 4).

seems to be a gradual process that identifies and includes Hardtowners in social positions that give access to knowledge and power within the community centre<sup>118</sup>.

Where do I find an image of locally appropriate behaviour that is related to specialized roles – creators of norms and values? I found that the local Hardtown organisation of age peer-groups is not permanent and cemented. There is a certain cross-boundary interaction, for example, connected to and dependent on the individual's (and their network's) participation in the informal market, illegal trading and gang fights. Some youth gangs as well as the higher echelons of illegal activity (the Hardmen and their court) do hold more cemented boundaries with considerably less cross boundary interactions. This is mainly apparent when they undertake illegal activities or plan crimes.

Mostly Hardtown individuals distinguish age borders as something that correlates with the individuals with whom they traded, stole, fought and gossiped with as they grew up. Hence these are often likened to early (youth) formations of street gangs. These cross-border interactions, which vary in relation to gender, age and status, become less important in relation to sexual relationships. Individual friendships and trading possibilities are, in many cases, highly dependent on age, gender and status, both of the individual as well as their respective networks.

I use the GRcc record of attendance published by the staff at the community centre as it includes some of the age-grades, something I was unable to find within my own study of the one-parent group<sup>119</sup>.

The age grade categories I use here are: children, teenagers, adults and pensioners. The age divisions used by the staff in the statistics survey (of frequenters to the community centre) do not directly correlate with my age grade divisions since they do not differentiate between the age grades of pensioners and adults. This creates a problem of age identification (conceptualisation) for the staff – particularly as this separation and act of stratification was expressed unanimously as a factor of utmost importance for the adult frequenters. For example, my informants often perceived an individual's ascribed age grade (by them and others) as one of the main factors that defined where you could sit (spatial divisions). This also determined on which days you would mostly attend and when during the day you would attend. The informants felt that their ages influenced the treatment they would receive by the staff. It was expressed that GRcc staff saw pensioners as comparatively unthreatening in manner. Many of my informants considered that this was one of the reasons the pensioners received preferential treatment and better choices in meeting times and tables from the staff.

Within the community centre, I observed only insubstantial socialising between the adults and pensioners, which further explains my use of four age grades instead of adopting the three age grades used by the community centre's statistical survey.

<sup>118</sup> Paraphrasing Kessing (1981) these divisions are constructed on premises reminiscent of a distinction of age grades that differ from the corporate age sets in that they consist of a number of states (statuses), which individuals move through over a period of time. The notion of age sets is initially drawn by Radcliff-Brown (1952 & 1965).

<sup>119</sup> In this instance a comparison with the one-parent group does not suffice as, of the fifteen members in the one-parent group, only two members could be identified as belonging to the teenage age grade, with the rest belonging to the adult age grade. Unfortunately, this makes the one-parent group into a limited sphere holding inadequate amounts of data to successfully undertake a study on the teenage age grade.



During the fieldwork period, I observed that a larger percentage of both male and female pensioners attended the centre during the early mornings, often to have breakfast. During one particular day of the week, mostly female pensioners would take part in a dance class specifically intended for the elderly citizens. Children over five and teenagers frequent the centre mostly after 15.00 and during their lunch hour, since they (were supposed to) attend school during the day. The community centre was mainly patronised between 11.00 and 15.00 by adults with children of school age, with children under five (who were often present) or without any children.

In my estimation, a higher percentage of adults vis-à-vis pensioners, attended the community centre. On most days, the adult attendance accounted for 60% of the frequenters between 11.00 and 15.00. According to the staff records for 1998-99 approximately 4,861 children attended the community centre. The attendance of teenagers was substantially less, only 2,929. It was also determined that 6,093 adults attended the centre. Using my observations, these 6,093 adults would approximate to 4500 adults and 1500 pensioners.

<i>1989-99:</i>	
<i>Pensioner</i>	<i>1,500</i>
<i>Adult</i>	<i>4,500</i>
<i>Teenager</i>	<i>2,929</i>
<i>Children</i>	<i>4,861</i>

This attendance was estimated to rise in 1999-2000 within most age grades.

<i>1999-2000:</i>	
<i>Pensioner</i>	<i>+ 9%</i>
<i>Adult</i>	<i>+ 16%</i>
<i>Teenager</i>	<i>+ 44%</i>
<i>Children</i>	<i>- 38%</i>

This illustrates a rise in most age grades but a sharp decline in the numbers of children attending the community centre - perhaps indicating a slump in the birth rate within the Hardtown. The rise in attendance is largely manifest within the teenage age set - presumably due to the fact that during the years 1989-99 a high percentage of children attending the centre reached the teenage age grade. This statistical survey illustrates an age grade division, which is in general approximation of attendance largely evenly proportioned. However I feel that this lends a limited image of the age grades frequenting the community centre as it does not represent and take into the calculation the locally individual time frames for the four age grades. I feel that this factor further complicates the process of local division and stratification<sup>120</sup>.

<sup>120</sup> My fieldwork at the community centre was mainly within the time frame between 10.00 and 16.30, when the attendance mainly comprised of adults, young children and pensioners.



## *Gender*

The third tool I use is a gender<sup>121</sup> based division and stratification of power and status. By fieldwork observation in the community centre and its groups, I noted that the female gender<sup>122</sup> comprised approximately 75% of the daily attendance. As the women within the community attended the centre on a much more regular basis than the males. I found that the GRcc was a key location in the social and economical life of many of my female informants. For many Hardtown women it had become a daily routine to take lunch there, spend hours talking to friends, to trade and take part in activities.

By contrast, Hardtown men did not spend much time within the GRcc nor did they take part regularly in any centre activities. The men who did infrequently attend the GRcc primarily came to play pool, have a quick lunch and then leave. A few men used the centre as a pick-up point for illegal trading (cf. Hamish) and some would just come by to pick up their respective wives or girlfriends. Only a small percentage of the Hardtown males attended the centre on the same basis and with the same view as most of the women.

As a result of constituting the majority of the frequenters, women developed a strong power base within the community centre<sup>123</sup> - mainly by force of numbers but also through additional strengths. This was informally apparent on a daily basis but was also officially recognised by female domination of the powerful community tenants' association<sup>124</sup>.

Through ongoing conversations with the men and women frequenting the community centre, it became clear that they were (partially) aware of this gender-based division of power. Many men negatively categorised the community centre as a place only for pensioners, children and women to meet and gossip. However, men frequenting the centre also seemed unwilling to acknowledge their own weak power base and status within the GRcc. Therefore they tried to distance themselves by making negative statements about the centre. When I tried to include or draw the men into discussing the subject it often resulted in them getting up and leaving the centre, claiming irritation at women's gossip.

In the centre, the men seldom were seen to take active part in any discussion<sup>125</sup>, with the sole exceptions of the male version of the one-parent group<sup>126</sup> and the job club.

By contrast, women were partially aware of their own strength and the power they held within the community centre vis-à-vis the men. They often jokingly commented that:

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<sup>121</sup> I am not here considering gender and its implementation as a Marxian argument, suggesting that the Hardtown notions of women embody a representation of 'women as social beings are first and foremost trapped and exploited as victims' (cited in Rapport and Overing 2000:147-8). The status and power of Hardtown men and women were likewise dependent on and determined by many different factors. Among these factors were individual skills: stealing and trading (Chapter 5), performing verbal and physical violence (Chapter 6), access to networks and status (Chapter 4). This also includes the local value placed on children and parenthood (Chapter 5).

<sup>122</sup> I exclude children and teenagers from this calculation.

<sup>123</sup> Women spend more time at the centre and were viewed in an official and unofficial capacity as being more active within the centre. As a result, they were aware of, took part in and knew the rules of the centre as well as the power processes of the centre.

<sup>124</sup> The locally influential association that initiated the opening of the centre mainly comprised women.

<sup>125</sup> Men were sometimes required for the displays of violence and fighting.

<sup>126</sup> This group did not meet very often.

*-Eh ken tha centre is fae us ken nae fae them. Di can gi to tea pub wie tha rest of tha mates and nae bother us, like. Hee, hee.*

*-Es nie like di ken any thing about nout here, like. Di are fucking stupid an dinna wanna learn nout!*

Such sentiments, with which most of the women regulars in the community centre would agree, usually resulted in whole-hearted laughter.

In consequence the gender based divisions placed Hardtown women higher than men on the GRcc hierarchical ladder, holding strong positions of power and status.

### Participation in community centre activities

The fourth tool of division and stratification within the community centre is active participation and its process of identification and inclusion-exclusion. Active participation in community centre-based activities and processes accordingly lend further understanding and access to places as well as to the GRcc processes of power and status.

The previous section on gender stratification and divisions illustrated that females<sup>127</sup> constituted the highest percent of frequenters, while also holding strong GRcc positions of power and status. This female domination is clearly mirrored in the local process of division ascribed to individuals in active participation within community centre activities.

*-Eh Viola and them only come to tha group if its something good like. Di would nae come if it's just an usual meeting, ken. Di are all users and di di 'nna care, abut nout like but them selves like.*

*-Eh some of them. Di ken who eh mean, like. Di only come fae di good ens. Di di 'nna care like about di group, ken?*

Individuals who do not take an active part in the community centre group activities are not seen as 'proper' members. Furthermore, these attendees are not considered as regular frequenters - even if they spend most of their days at the GRcc. The regular group and club attendees instead ascribe them with a partial status of an outsider, viewing them with degrees of hostility and irritation. These individuals' positions within the centre are deemed as lower than the one ascribed to the active members. The time frame and frequency of attendance also affect their individual standing and inclusion into the centre's power structure. This also strongly influences the way in which these individuals are categorised and viewed by regular frequenters, within the process of spatial divisions and internal local identification ascription.

Only a select few non-participants were deemed to belong at the most prestigious table within the community centre (Diana's). The local spatial and identification processes counted these particular individuals as the most influential and powerful within the GRcc. However, this table would occasionally be visited by less powerful individuals, who came to sell, trade or buy stolen goods or drugs.

<sup>127</sup> I exclude children and teenagers from this calculation.

## Money

The fifth tool of division and stratification is money and the behaviour of individuals in relation to it<sup>128</sup>. As with Day's (1999:139) study of the informal market trading of London prostitutes, I found that Hardtowners did not consider 'fluctuations in the money supply' as a shortage but merely as a need to change their style of stealing or the area within which they stole.

In the Hardtown, risk taking was a way of life and a way of gaining status. During trading, I found that the telling and retelling of a story could improve local status, provided he/she did not get caught. Similar to Day's (1994,1999) prostitutes, a certain amount of knowledge was shared about state interference<sup>129</sup> during conversations in the community centre and within individual networks.

The behaviour and attendance of individuals in the GRcc was strongly influenced by their access to money. I found that some individuals stopped attending when they periodically were (as my informants stated), *flush and di had enough for now, like!* Their behaviour was felt to become more suspicious to other frequenters as if they suspected that others wanted *tea sub a few boab of them*.

Money or rather the lack of it plays an important part in local individual ascription and thus acceptance by the group of individuals viewed to belong within the GRcc.

I found that Hardtowners with money did not regularly attend the community centre. For their part, regular frequenters did not approve of their participation in centre activities nor did they accept them as full members within the GRcc. Moreover, my informants felt that people with funds should spend time elsewhere and not flaunt their money in their faces. Visitors/frequenters with money would consequently be excluded from positions of influence within the GRcc power structure - leading to probable changes in spatial allocations and ascriptions.

I found that these changes in attendance in accordance with their monetary situation<sup>130</sup> merely affected approximately 20-30% of the female frequenters. In addition, I would again emphasise that the regular base of frequenters to the centre belonged mainly to the giro-wage class, with access to a limited and low source of income. This suggested that individuals with a limited access to funds constituted the majority of the frequenters attending the community centre and held the key to its power structure.

<sup>128</sup> A division based on a monetary issue might initially suggest that it should have been included in the calculation, stratification and division based on socio-economic means (working class or giro class) used initially. In this case, the local function of money as a divisional tool touches on something different from the previously discussed working-class division. The main patrons of the community centre are based within the giro-wage class and the importance placed locally is on money as something, which excludes (by their own choices) individuals from wanting to attend the community centre.

<sup>129</sup> Of particular importance was the subject of social services coming to check on living arrangements and cutting down the giro-wage. Informants often discussed the best ways to 'borrow', how to best fool shop attendants and guards and other such information that would help to 'borrow' successfully in the city centre shops (cf. Chapters 4 and 5). (Borrow is a colloquial term for shoplifting.)

<sup>130</sup> I found that many of these individuals, without access to legal funds apart from their giro-wage, seemed in many cases to belong to a faction of the informal market trading in stolen goods and drugs. A 'windfall' in this fluctuating source of income meant that some of the frequenters would cut down or perhaps stop their attendance of the community centre.

-Eh di wouldnea be here if di had a few boab to spend. Eh wouldna, ken. Yea just dinna, like.  
 -Eh ken tha is a lot of di others tha dinna come here like to spend time, tha is if di has some money, like. Di are nea like us, ken. We spend all the time here, ken.  
 -Eh come here if eh dinna hae nae money tha go else where, like.  
 -Meh sister, ken she comes in to tha centre and sells wha she has found like and then mostly goes of like to town again.

### Family-network structure

The sixth and last dividing tool considers the importance of the local family network structure on the GRcc and one-parent group definitions and on the stratifications of power and status.

Particular residential units and family networks are considered as important factors in determining an individual's status and power within the Hardtown community. The networks are linked to most other areas of local power and are continuously adapting to fit the different short-term links required.

Within the GRcc and the one-parent group, a strong family network structure seemed to temporarily override any other dividing and stratifying factor within the Hardtown power hierarchy. The fragmentising hierarchical imagery, which these ever-changing network links might generate further, extrapolates on the local problem of fragmented individual and group emotive, stratifying and identification processes. For example, a complex combination of all five dividing factors, mentioned above, can only be considered as superseded by a residential unit and family network containing a Hardman.

During any ambiguous situations within the GRcc the hierarchically low status of the community dissident (a female heroin addict<sup>131</sup>) might, due to local identification problems, push such an individual towards a haughty, very aggressive attitude and further unorthodox behaviour. The usual reaction towards this individual was a combination of an aggressive display of violence, mixed with a certain degree of cordial and placating downsizing.

For example, the centre's staff considered Diana to belong on the lowest hierarchical strata within the community centre. She is unemployed, a former heroin addict; she steals and sells stolen goods and drugs. Diana feels that this is why she receives sudden and harsh punitive sanctions from the staff, (as described below in the section called trouble p 75). Yet, at the same time, Diana is viewed by many within the community centre as one of the strongest sources of power. The GRcc frequenters placed her highly in the local hierarchy, as she is a good 'borrower', good at trading, has strong and extensive networks for trading and support. Furthermore her closeness to her two Hardmen brothers increases and adds support to her status, power and her hierarchical position in the Hardtown. This is coupled with the support and added status and power she is awarded by her closeness to her two Hardmen brothers. I found that her previous heroin addiction did for a while make some individuals view her as powerless, but her renewed connections to her brothers effectively changed that. Some Hardtowners still view her as someone not to be trusted because of her partner Jane's lack of skills. However, even in the face of this fragmented view Diana's strong networks and her skill

<sup>131</sup> I found that heroin addiction was, vis-à-vis other addictions, viewed in a more negative way by many Hardtowners.



in trading still placed her spatially in a place of power within the community centre, holding court around the centre's most prestigious table.

### **Division and opposition between members and staff at the community centre**

I now return to the relations between staff and the regulars at the Gentleman Robber community centre. By watching the interaction between staff and visitors, I quickly realised that a large gulf existed between the two groups.

Their mutual body language and verbal acerbic exchanges further emphasised the dividing lines - its borders, structure and the rifts found between these two factions. The normal, everyday exchanges of joking threats, performances of violence and *widoin* between frequenters would immediately take on a new air of violence and real anger when breached by a member of staff (cf. Chapter 6).

The constant process of stress and power struggles between staff and frequenters took on many different forms. The constricting forms of behaviour for the staff, set down in their employment descriptions, effectively prevented any extreme reactions or actions on their part towards the frequenters as a response to their aggressive taunting.

However, the staff had some effective punitive sanctions at their disposal. They could, for example, ban a person from attending the community centre but needed proof of wrongdoing on the premises (like smoking illegal substances or drinking alcohol). Furthermore, my informants felt that the GRcc staff used security cameras to spy on them with the intention of reporting eventual infractions to the police.

The staff at the centre could and did emphasise their own power within the centre by making sure that the offending individuals were moved around from table to table within the GRcc<sup>132</sup>. As the staff ran the centre's groups, they had the right (according to the centre's rules) to choose the most suitable table for all centre activities. If they wanted to use an occupied table for any reason the staff could therefore ask non-participating frequenters to move to some other table allocated by the staff. The staff would thus in effect usurp or destroy the contextual power stratifications through such spatial disruptions. To be forced to move in this way affected the clientele's status as it was in part influenced by such spatial placement. Therefore, my informants considered it as a tool employed by the staff to demonstrate to the frequenters who held the power within the centre.

The staff used these measures frequently, and possibly indiscriminately. In some circumstances it seemed that their decisions were based on very little or no proof at all.

The staff's actions periodically led to a worsening of relations between staff and frequenters - a tenuous relation to begin with that thus became further fraught with tension. The informants answered what they viewed as an oppressive and negating behaviour by the staff by escalating the emphasis, strength and aggression of their local means of resistance or opposition. For example, they increased the performance of verbal and physical violence, the stealing from the centre; and the frequenters even at times threw stones at the centre. This

<sup>132</sup> Hardtowners with the highest status and strongest local network affiliations decide who is allowed to sit at the tables. The right to make such a decision is a highly temporal standing that is dependent on the strength of a Hardtowners' endorsement and faction as well as on their mutual use for each other.

argumentative and aggressive behaviour on the regulars' side leads to further restrictions from the staff, which turns the violent power dichotomy into a recurrent evil circle, with tempers and behaviour on both sides becoming increasingly short and fraught.

This is illustrated by the treatment one of my main informants received as she unsuspectingly walked into the community centre one morning.

### Trouble 1998

Paraphrasing Diana's words and through my own observations; what occurred was that, when Diana walked through the doors to the centre, she was promptly escorted off the premises by staff, while being informed that she was not allowed to frequent the centre for the period of a month<sup>133</sup>. It emerged that the woman in charge of the centre decided the previous day to exclude Diana from the centre for a substantial period of time.

Diana did not object too strongly to her treatment at first, as she was both shocked and surprised by her forceful exclusion from the community centre's space. The surprise and shock she experienced was completely in tune with my own, especially as she and I had spent the whole of the previous day at the community centre together. I could therefore testify that she had not been perpetrating anything that could be viewed as an illegal act or even an act against the community centre's own rules.

At this point, our mutual confusion was complete and we decided instead to adjourn to her flat to discuss the matter further. The only thing that we jointly could think of, which may have lead to her subsequent expulsion from the centre, was that my informant had taken part in a very aggressive and acerbic joking banter against or with<sup>134</sup> the leader of the community centre, on the previous day.

This local *wido* struggle had ended on a very harsh tone and had left 'Iron balls' looking and sounding as though she was indifferent to the hardships of the frequenters. This *wido* performance had forced the community centre leader into a defensive position. It had made her seem as if she accorded herself a superior status in comparison to the clientele, while finding herself verbally left at a loss by the aggressive banter. At that point, 'Iron balls' had abruptly left the table without finishing the banter. It was felt by most of the individuals around the table that she had left on a very sour note. As a result, she had been made to look, to most of the people at the centre, as a loser and weak as well as *stuck up*, since most of them enjoy listening to and to take part in any form of good banter or bitching. In addition to this, the ethos of the Hardtown is structured and based to a large degree on individual and group participation and skill in the performance of exactly this kind of verbal (and physical) violence and banter (cf. Chapter 6).

Diana was consequently left feeling both upset and furious at suddenly finding herself banned from attending the community centre. She was most upset to find herself excluded from her most important local communal space (the community centre) where all her friends

<sup>133</sup> They informed her that she was not even allowed to be on the centre's property. This meant that Diana could not, for instance, even stand in front of the centre or on the steps leading up to the centre if she needed to meet someone, or the police would be called to remove her.

<sup>134</sup> Whether the banter was against or with 'Iron balls' depended on which of the two participants you asked.

spend most of their days<sup>135</sup>. She was also furious because of the perceived injustice of it all (as she expressed it). Diana felt that she had no idea why and how 'Iron balls' could be allowed to expel her. She also felt that the previous day's banter was too insignificant an event, in her mind, to warrant such a harsh reaction. However, Diana did not forget to point out that she had 'won' the argument the day before.

Diana decided that she wanted to confront her accuser to find out why she had 'really' been expelled from the centre and we both decided to return to the community centre.

Diana stormed in to the centre and demanded to speak to 'Iron balls'. She was allowed into her office and came out soon afterwards, still looking both angry and confused. She told me that she had been banned as she was accused of having smoked hash at home and had later come to the centre while still 'high'. She was also told that someone had informed on her but that the 'intoxication' was the only reason cited for her exclusion.

We were all completely confused and surprised at this turn of events. In fact, this added severe complications to her situation as she had become accused of something that she could not prove or disprove. It placed her in both an awkward and unsolvable position.

The final outcome of the day's events eventually ended in compromise. Diana decided to take her punishment and made an agreement with 'Iron balls' to stay away from the centre for two days, after which she would be free to come back. Diana later explained that she agreed to the compromise because she did not want to be banned from the centre for too long, that all of her friends spent their time there and some of her illegal transactions took place on the premises. Diana's settlement and her subsequent acceptance of a punishment can be regarded as 'Iron ball's' means of destabilising or destroying Diana's position of power within the centre - while simultaneously striving to cement and conceptualise her own power within the centre. This exemplifies an attempt to emphasise the powers the staff hold over the community centre's regulars and the centre's space.

Diana neither fought this decision nor declined the compromise, as she felt that she could not afford to take the risk of facing a possible permanent expulsion from her local communal space. It is interesting to note that the position of power that my informant had won within the community centre due to her successful banter the day before was sufficiently counteracted and she had, both literally and figuratively, been put in her place. The manner in which she was outmanoeuvred in this power play with the community centre leader stresses the basis on which the respective actors' strengths, means and powers lay within the local dichotomy.

The members of the one-parent group and other frequenters of the centre disliked and generally viewed the staff as the local agents of their mainstream enemies. By extension, they thought that the staff took on all of the characteristics of the state and mainstream society that

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<sup>135</sup> After my fieldwork I twice revisited the GRcc in hope of a reunion with Diana and our friends. During my visit in 2001, I found that the area had changed and I did not encounter any of my previous informants when I ventured into the GRcc. I returned to the community and the centre in 2002, in hope of meeting my informants. On this occasion I did run in to two of the infrequent visitors to the one-parent group, who told me that Diana together with her friends and the main hub of the illegal market had relocated to one of the other community centres. This confirmed my earlier impression that the community, the centre and its clientele had changed significantly since my fieldwork.

were felt to perpetrate the exclusion and the marginalization of local individuals and the Hardtown community.

The GRcc clientele behaviour suggested that the staff's controlling measures and sanctions legitimated and thus authorised a freer expression of their own negative views of the staff. Such views identified the GRcc staff as lazy, controlling, *stuck up* and as an outside faction that continuously looked down on them. I propose that the clientele's regular use of such negative sentiments and their inclusion of the staff within the baiting verbal violence could be thought to contain the first stages of subverting the dominant gaze of the staff (and by extension the state). It seems to be a local and individual subversion of challenging 'one power relationship by playing it off against others', as described by Rapport and Overing (2000:121), (cf. Foucault 1977).

The local responses towards the domination of the marginal space and identity within the community also resulted in other means of contesting and subverting this domination. These included: breaching the rules of the community centre as well as perpetrating illegal acts within the community centre. Most clientele had knowledge of how to avoid the cameras, if and when they wanted to break the rules. They undertook subversive activities (drug deals or 'trading') using known camera 'blind spots', arranging for someone to create a diversion or, more simply, doing deals 'under the table' – where hands could move quickly and the camera's eye could not reach.

### **Summary**

As the above analysis shows, I found that internal Hardtown dichotomies based on power are connected to the informal economy, giro-wage and a notion of exclusion. It illustrates a daily life without security but based on disjointed power-dichotomies, suspicion, fear and paranoia - resulting in a fragmented individual and collective identity.

The community's factions, family and social networks (and my individual informants) indicate a feeling of temporary dichotomy that disconnects as well as breaches, the internal disjointed communication, affiliation and identification. This community expresses a feeling of exclusion from the mainstream existence and its values. Moreover, this feeling is at times used as a tool for financial gain. The Hardtowners also disengage from and oppose these mainstream values and long term institutions (tainted by association with the state) through, for example, their everyday performance of violence. This performance is also used as a tool to resist and oppose these external institutions and their agents (such as GRcc staff).

In comparison, I found the staff's and regulars' notions of the stratification and power division within the community centre differed widely. For example, the staff considered that clothing, money and controlled behaviour were signs of high status, while the Hardtowners preferred family networks, skills within the informal market and links to powerful allies such as Hardmen. From my informants, I ascertained that the different strata within the community centre were defined by the status of the table to which the individual is considered to belong.

Individual fragmentation of status and power dichotomisation not only sows discord and confusion within the marginal community's structures, but also leaves most individuals considering where they belong and in what they believe. This internal self-doubt is thus linked dually to an external and internal dichotomised discourse of fragmentation and alienation,



which creates problems at a basic level for the marginal individual. Even when it comes to the apparently simple choice of where to sit, GRcc clientele are obliged to adhere to the decision of the regular frequenters with the strongest networks and with the highest status within the GRcc.

### **3 A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A SINGLE PARENT**

#### **Introduction**

The previous chapter presented brief introductions of the one-parent group and the frequenters I encountered on a daily basis at Diana's table within the GRcc in the Hardtown. Progressing from where Chapter 2 finished, I concentrate on the individual perspective by introducing my five main informants and their life histories. This is done in an attempt to present a closer knowledge of these individuals, their lives and everyday problems.

During my fieldwork, I came in contact and worked with three different groups of frequenters of the GRcc.

1. The women in the one-parent group
2. The individuals who usually sat around 'our' (Diana's) table
3. Individuals who no longer had any strong links within the community centre, the one-parent group or the Hardtown community, but still frequented the centre casually.

The five informants I chose were the most verbal and dissimilar individuals I encountered among these three groups. By so doing, I hoped that their different life stories would lend a complete image of the multiple everyday life experience within the GRcc.

This chapter begins by introducing these five main informants and providing brief personal histories and illustrations from their daily lives. I hope that this information will help construct an image of these individuals, their lives and past history as well as explaining who they are and how they came to be at the community centre in the Hardtown.

The extent and depth of the introductions and descriptions of each informant clearly depend on the extent and depth to which I was able to meet, converse with and study the different individuals. The introduction for each informant begins with a physical description of the person in an effort to bring him/her visually closer to the imagination and mind of the reader. It then progresses to briefly delineate the individual informant: class, education, family background and socio-economic situation. It then considers how often each frequents the community centre; the reasons given by the informant for attendance; how long he/she has lived in the Hardtown and, lastly, his/her ties to the informal market.

The chapter then offers a presentation of a day in the life of five single parents in the Hardtown, portrayed and structured using fragments from the day and of their style of speech. I depict the individual informant, his/her personality and his/her everyday life as experienced among the community centre frequenters. The structure and style chosen for this portrayal represents and mirrors the fragmented heart and soul of the marginal, violent and black-humoured Hardtown.

I also present a brief discussion of the interesting and continual presence of boredom within a Hardtown everyday discourse of stress and fear. The Hardtowners' often mentioned and discussed a notion of boredom, stress and isolation; exemplified and highlighted by the

paranoid, violent shards of their fragmented lives shared, as my informants felt, by all of them on a separate yet intimately intertwined basis<sup>136</sup>.

### *Introduction to my main informants*

I begin this life-history presentation with an introduction to Diana and Jane and their shared lives, since they are closely linked to each other by their fluctuating relationship - and all that this entails.

#### *Diana*

Diana is in her 20s. She has long dark hair cut in a short straight bang, which usually hangs in lanky strands close to her forehead. Like most of the other members that frequent the community centre, Diana wears an abundance of gold rings and necklaces. Unlike most of the others in the community she does not wear any earrings or any make-up. Diana is usually dressed in a dark blue or black Kappa shell suit, sports trainers and a sporty t-shirt. Diana is occasionally preoccupied with her physical well-being and often speaks of how fit she used to be before she met Jane. At times, she still tries to keep herself in good shape by fitness training in her own home - where she usually has an assortment of relatives staying. Paradoxically, Diana's disregard for good nutrition, personal cleanliness and dental care make her seem oblivious to basic hygiene and health. She has occasionally been known to arrive at meetings in the community centre with unwashed hair, dirty clothes and generally looking unclean.

At her young age, her teeth have already rotted away due to neglect and drug use as well as a high sugar intake in her diet. Last year Diana received dentures, which she believes make her more attractive and younger looking - an opinion which she reiterates constantly, perhaps to hide (what I assume to be) the embarrassment and shame she attaches to wearing dentures at her age. Medications and drugs take up an extensive part of her time: she currently uses anti-depressants, hash and tranquillisers on a daily basis (she also sells many of these and other drugs).

Diana is one of the few GRcc frequenters who has ever been in employment and still occasionally tries to find employment - or, at least, pretends to (cf. Chapter 2).

Regarding her status within the community, Diana does not define herself either as being unemployed, poor or as a drug addict. She mainly considers herself as a working-class woman (down on her luck) and usually identifies herself with the marginalized single parents - even though she is not, in fact, officially registered as a parent.

Diana's opinion of herself is in stark contrast to the views held by outsiders, such as doctors, social workers and the GRcc staff, all of whom would classify her as belonging to a

<sup>136</sup> Boredom was a word used by the Hardtowners almost as often as violence, fighting or trading. This notion of boredom was embodied within the artificial construction of a false safety. Many frequenters voiced a feeling of being continuously and paradoxically divided by daily paranoid fragmentation and violence. At the same time, they were brought closer together by the shared knowledge of a mutual paranoia and fragmented marginality - while facing boredom, stress and fear in the violent poverty with which they were all familiar.

low status group within the marginal poor. Some also describe her as a drug addict who has no real connection to the socio-economic structure of a normative society.

Within the Hardtown community, Diana's socio-economic status is very complicated. On the one hand, she is considered to belong to one of the higher echelons of its hierarchy due to her strong trading networks of illegal goods and, in particular, her connections to her Hardman brothers. However, her own past history of heroin addiction and ongoing relationship with Jane (who is of low status – see below) have a negative affect on Diana's community image. Predictably, none of the frequenters show (to her face) that they are ambivalent about her status within the community's hierarchy as that would both insult her and her Hardman family. This is most apparent within the community centre itself, where she held court at the most prestigious table and presided over the informal market trading going on there.

Diana comes from a big family with non-skilled-working class roots and they have stayed in the Hardtown (or its vicinity) all of their lives. Both of her parent's roots reach back to the many Italian emigrants who came to work in the jute factories in Dundee, since in Italy (Diana explained) they lived in poverty without any chances of employment. However, Diana has turned her back on her parent's working class way of life. Only her mother and one of her sisters are presently in periodic employment.

Diana is very close to her family; and especially her mother, who is a strong woman with close ties to all of her children and with whom Diana is in daily contact. All of Diana's brothers have turned their backs on legal employment and are presently counted among the few Hardmen who are seen as the community's strong socio-economical hierarchical leaders (cf. Chapters 4 and 5).

Diana did not finish school, but started work as soon as she was legally able to do so in one of the local factories - as did some of the other members of her family. She was laid off with many other workers when the factory closed down and she re-schooled herself as a cook.

While working as a cook she met Jane, a heroin addict, who was then in a relationship with one of Diana's female cousins and she was subsequently introduced to heavy drug use. Diana also became hooked after a few months on both heroin and Jane (as she jokingly put it). Diana and Jane have been a together as a couple for over ten years and have a relationship that can only be described as being in a total state of flux.

Usually, Diana lives with her partner Jane (and her son) in Jane's flat, but has her own house where she receives her social services benefits. Strangely enough, they both consider themselves to be single parents taking care of Jane's son.

During my fieldwork period Diana frequented the GRcc on a daily basis. She spent her time holding court with other individuals of top status at the table with the highest prestige within the community centre (cf. Chapter 2).

Diana was also one of the main and regular frequenters of the one-parent group and was regarded as a strong and driving force within this group. This was particularly obvious in connection with anything linked to informal market exchanges and negotiations but she was also very active within the centre itself and in the general community.

Diana's reasons for frequenting the GRcc were:



1. The community centre was a trading centre for the local informal market, in which she had strong networks.
2. It was the meeting place for her friends, offered activities for children and was the venue for the one-parent group; it also gave her access to cheap and nourishing food and to excursions outside the Hardtown.
3. As the community centre was built for individuals residing in the immediate neighbourhood, in which she lived with Jane, she felt that it was in her 'patch'.
4. It was the meeting place for individuals who considered themselves as being among the poorest and most stigmatised in the community, and lacked the funds to go elsewhere (cf. chapter 2). Diana therefore thought that this was the perfect environment to construct new trading networks as well as a place to flaunt her status as the sister of two Hardmen.

### Jane

Jane is a woman in her 30s with dirty blond hair cut in a 'mullet'. She is a single mother with a young son. She is very thin (on the verge of emaciated), looking both strained and unhealthy. Her face is pallid and unremarkable, with protruding eyes, which make her resemble a victim of rickets. She takes no exercise and is currently on a daily diet of methadone, hash, tranquillisers and anti-depressants. Like Diana, she is bedecked with the gold jewellery to which most individuals within the community seem to be so partial. The fingers of her unwashed hands are covered with rings of different sizes. Gold necklace upon gold necklace hang around her neck; her ears are pierced with so many gold hoops that she resembles an Indian bride decked out in all the finery of her borrowed dowry. Jane usually wears the same rather dirty looking Kappa shell suit, trainers and sport's top, but occasionally changes into a pair of trousers resembling combat fatigues.

Her diet is very limited and she seems to exist on sugared tea and a few bags of crisps, which has left her with rotting teeth and bad breath. Last year, I accompanied her when she went to the hospital to have all of her teeth pulled out and replaced by dentures.

Jane fights an ongoing battle against depression and drugs. She has had numerous mental breakdowns during the last twenty years which often lead to her admitting herself into the LIFF (Dundee's psychiatric hospital)

Even within such a socio-economically marginal community as the Hardtown, Jane's status is viewed among the lowest, since she used to be a heroin addict. Most Hardtowners consider individuals with this addiction as shameless and degenerate. (By contrast, the use of other illegal drugs such as E, hash and acid are more highly esteemed within the community). Her low status is further reduced by the fact that she has no personal family connections or support, within or without the community. This leaves her with no family network of her own to support or fight for her if she is offended<sup>137</sup>.

<sup>137</sup> Frequenters of the community centre feel that Jane brings only misfortune to herself and others; they describe her as useless and without connections. It seems that Jane, has never taken any successful part in the informal economy. Her pathetic attempts at thieving and trading (as described by most) either resulted in her taking the wrong items or failing to obtain any goods at all. These attempts have left her either with nothing to sell or with goods that cannot be easily traded and which are not wanted. For example, she once turned up at the centre with a whole box of air fresheners - a 'job' that was the subject of many jokes in the centre. Many, therefore, view her as a burden, contributing little of value to the community - an opinion shared by many of the staff at the centre, albeit for different reasons (cf. Chapters 4 and 5).

Jane was born into a large and poverty-stricken family. Tales from her early childhood are always described through her sad tear-rimmed eyes, over a watery cup of tea. Even within such a socio-economically marginal community as the Hardtown, most of Jane's family are counted among the lowest on the hierarchical scale. Her father was an alcoholic who never held down full-time employment. Her mother was the opposite, a strong and hard woman (Jane's words), who was the focus of power in the family - and still is.

Due to Jane's father's increasing alcoholism and his abusive nature, Jane's mother eventually left him and moved away from their house. At the time, she was pregnant with her last and very unexpected child, Jane - who grew up only knowing the abusive and hateful side of her mother. According to Jane, her mother blamed Jane for her conception and the trouble that the late pregnancy inflicted<sup>138</sup>.

Years later, when her mother realised that Jane was failing school and was addicted to alcohol and drugs, she threw her out of the house and banished her from the family. Jane was thus obliged to fend for herself from the age of 15. She was taken in by the social services and moved around from place to place as her drug abuse continued to grow for many years.

In her own words, Jane thinks that she spent much of this time with many 'faceless' men and does not recall any direct memories from this time. She eventually became pregnant (by another heroin addict - a man she did not really know, did not love and in no way cared for; nor did he know, love or care for her). At first, she was angry about the pregnancy and thought, 'Oh no I will have to stop all this now, don't I (the drugs?)'. In time, she reconciled herself to the pregnancy, consoling herself by thinking 'maybe finally I will get someone who cares about me and loves me'.

The social services took more active care of her when they found out that she was pregnant and made sure she cut down her drug intake - even though she admits to taking stuff they knew nothing about. The social services found Jane a flat in the Hardtown, quite close to where she had been living with Diana's cousin. In time, Jane left her and started seeing Diana. Diana's family does not approve of their liaison and feel that Jane is a problem and the reason that Diana lost her job and started taking drugs.

Jane has tried to commit suicide several times, which some of the community centre's staff consider a cry for help - while others see it as attention-seeking behaviour.

Jane had very limited educational experience. She did not even finish basic elementary school, but left instead to satisfy her increasing needs for money, brought on by her drug use. Jane has received no further education since leaving school. She is partially illiterate, but did teach herself to read by buying novels at second hand stores.

Jane was born in the Hardtown community and spent her childhood in the community. When her parents divorced, Jane moved with her mother and the rest of the family to another council estate. When she left home, she returned to the Hardtown and still lives in the area.

<sup>138</sup> According to Jane's sister, their mother only saw Jane as a reminder of her husband's abusive nature and made sure that Jane bore the full brunt of her displeasure - in sharp contrast to her behaviour with her other children. Jane acknowledges that, even during her school days, alcohol and drugs seemed to be the only way to hide from her feelings of insecurity.

During the time I worked in the GRcc, Jane frequented the centre daily, generally as often as and for the same reasons as Diana.

Jane has strong ties to the informal market through her relationship with Diana and Diana's Hardman affiliations. Even though Diana's family does not accept Jane, she still benefits from their gains within the informal market. She occasionally accompanies Diana shoplifting but is not particularly efficient or good at the task. This is why Diana normally undertakes such tasks by herself. She sometimes also tries to help Diana sell these illegally obtained goods as well as drugs but, as the rest of the community does not trust her, this is difficult for her. Most individuals preferred to deal with Diana, who has a more honest and better reputation<sup>139</sup> and higher status.

### Hamish

By my estimation, Hamish is in his late twenties or early thirties<sup>140</sup>. He is a part-time single parent with one son. He is of average height with sharp blue eyes that forever seem to scrutinise everyone. In conversation, he will only sit with his back to the wall, facing the door 'in case (as he puts it) anyone comes in or anything happens'. I assume that this behaviour is residual paranoia left over from his criminal days in the community. Hamish's features are sharp, drawn and he is seemingly constantly aware of all movement going on around him. He has light brown or dark blond hair, but sports a clean shaved head. He has heavy gold hoops in both his ears and colourful tattoos cover his arms and upper body. The tattoos range from ones displaying affiliations to football and a Hardtown gang as well as a few aboriginal-style tattoos.

Hamish usually wears brand name clothing but has at times even been seen in jeans, a style of apparel that is rather unusual in the Hardtown. According to most frequenters of the GRcc, he is the visual epitome of a Hardtown Hardman. He is sharp, fast and intelligent with a keen mind and a tough attitude. His intelligence and literacy is something that he often kept hidden behind a charming and sarcastic façade, which he used to confuse most individuals. His general physical appearance separates him from most of the inhabitants in the Hardtown. Hamish seems to take care of his health and muscular body. He proudly comments on his white(ish) teeth and he also body-builds and eats a more balanced diet than the general Hardtown inhabitant.

Hamish broke with family tradition and left school without gaining any certificates. Instead, he moved to the Hardtown and later joined a Hardtown gang. He admits that he lived for a long time as a social outcast, thief and troublemaker.

Hamish defined his own class as either 'poor trash' or 'outside the class system' and thought he was 'less than working class or lower class'. Although many in the community, including the GRcc staff, categorize him as middle-class – the council employs him as a social worker – Hamish vehemently argues against belonging to the working-class or any other class.

<sup>139</sup> Diana's family connections make her word more credible within the community. While I was working in the field, Jane took part in such dealings herself a few times, but her unpredictable behaviour put a stop to it as no one wanted to deal with her if Diana was not there to secure the 'honesty' of the deal. The others thought that Jane had a compulsion to cheat them while having no qualms about going back on her word. She did this often during the early period of my fieldwork – failing to pay for goods that she either took to sell on or for her own use, promising to pay the seller money at a later date, without actually doing so. This behaviour was something that often led to endless controversy and fighting between Jane and Diana.

<sup>140</sup> He was reluctant to give his real age.



Hamish was adopted as a baby and brought up by a well-to-do, upper-middle-class family in Broughty Ferry. He does not know who his biological parents are and informs me that he does not want to know who they are. He feels that his current family life is complete with his adoptive mother and his son.

Due to his hyperactive and aggressive behaviour as a child, Hamish's parents found him difficult to control and they experienced problems curtailing any of his illegal activities. At school, he had no interest in lessons and spent his days making trouble, smoking and stealing. Following the death of his father when Hamish was still a teenager, his behaviour severely deteriorated and he was expelled from school. His mother tried, without success, to encourage him to return to school. At the time, Hamish defied and disregarded any offers of help and he left home and moved to the Hardtown to live in a council flat. At school, he had become acquainted with older boys from the poorer areas such as the Hardtown and, after a while, he had joined one of their gangs.

He spent years in the gang, rising higher and higher in the internal hierarchy, finally becoming one of the leading members of the gang. In this position, his connections with the informal market were strong and (as some of my informants told me) other Hardmen looking for help with robberies, break-ins and other, more violent crimes could rely on his support. Hamish 'graduated' into the higher league of violent criminals in the community and became 'known' and recognised in the community<sup>141</sup>. This went on for a number of years until his girlfriend became pregnant, while they were in the process of breaking up, leading him to run away from his responsibilities.

Hamish tells me that it was the second he saw his son's face for the first time that he stopped running and fighting against becoming a dad. Instead of hating the role of father and rebelling against any responsibility, he now wanted to be there for his son. His ex-girlfriend wanted to get married and Hamish toyed with the idea until he realised that he did not feel anything for her and therefore he reasoned that marriage would only make things worse. This drove them further apart and she started treating him with hate and disrespect, trying to stop him from seeing his son. After a long time of fights and court appearances, they now have shared custody of their son.

Hamish sees himself as a single-dad even though he shares custody of his son. Apart from this shared custody, Hamish has no real connection or relationship with his ex-girlfriend. After his son's birth, Hamish felt a need to change himself and his life - reinventing himself so that he could become a parent of whom his son could be proud. He gave up his gang life and friends and went to college to get an education. He gained some O levels at night school then graduated with a National Certificate in social service counselling after one and a half years of study.

He first lived in the Hardtown during his early teenage years and only moved a few years ago from his old flat in the near vicinity of the GRcc to a shared flat on the border of the Hardtown.

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<sup>141</sup> He lived from day to day, from fight to fight and, as a member of the informal economy for years, spent his money on himself and his flat, frequenting pubs, clubs and parties. He took all the drugs offered (except heroin) and drank on an everyday basis. He had a stream of girlfriends and did not particularly care about anyone apart from his mother and his friends in the gang.



Hamish used to frequent the community centre several times a week when he was part of a gang and the informal market. Today he seldom frequents the GRcc since he spends most of his time at his place of employment or at home with his son. It remains the place where he meets some of his (mostly female) friends from the community. One of his stated reasons for frequenting the GRcc in the past was that the centre was one of the focal points within the community for the trade of illegal items or activities and for the planning of these criminal activities. Hamish also used the community centre to meet up with friends who were not part of the gang and the criminal scene.

### Darla

Darla is a woman in her 20s. She is a single parent with one son. Darla is a pretty, blue-eyed blonde with bouncy, curly hair and a matching disposition. She is an intelligent, but girly woman who loves mind-games. Darla's apparel does not bear much resemblance to most of the women within the Hardtown. She is more involved with the dancing, clubbing and rave scene than any other individual I met in the community. Darla does not share any of the ordinary physical traits of malnourishment or physical neglect often found among individuals within the community. She is obsessed with her physical health and is particular about what she eats. Darla also trains by weight lifting and her body is toned enough for her to be able to wear one outrageous outfit after another at her weekend raves.

She went to university and, after graduating with degree in mathematics, has now taken a job in Manchester. Even as a student, her main interests lay not in her degree course, but in the weekends which she spent partying, while her son was taken care of by her grandfather from Friday to Sunday evening.

Darla has some ties to the informal market; she buys stolen goods as well as trades in and uses drugs such as E, acid, amphetamines, hash and even new chemical concoctions such as Base. During periods of depression, she has also been dependant on several different anti-depressants and tranquillisers.

Darla's family background can be defined as being periodically employed non-skilled-working-class. Darla's grandparents worked periodically for one of Dundee's many factories but her mother was different. Darla described her as a 'socio-economically marginal drug addict and alcoholic'. Her mother was the image of a 60's wild child in a working class world that could not cope with her. Her lifestyle eventually resulted in an unexpected pregnancy.

Her mother's pregnancy and alcoholism conspired to move them down the social ladder from an affluent area, where they lived close to her grandparents, to the Hardtown. Darla's mother's family denounced her and was happy to let her fend for herself. Darla and her mother lived in the Hardtown in a flat provided by the council. Her mother continued to take drugs and drink during Darla's early childhood years and died while Darla was still young. At that moment, her previously invisible grandparents (as she put it) swooped in to take Darla back home with them. Her grandparents raised her and tried to instil in her the importance of hard work - something that they previously had failed to instil in her mother. Growing up in their care, Darla did them proud in becoming one of the best students in her school, while (in secret) living a hedonistic lifestyle outside school.

Because of the limited friendships she found within her new school, she felt lonely, different and unhappy in her working class neighbourhood and school. During her last years in school, her insecurity unfortunately resulted in her becoming involved with a charming older man who seduced her. Their liaison resulted in her teenage pregnancy. Darla's liaison with her son's father ceased when she realised that, not only would he not marry her, he was unable to marry her as he was already married and had two children. Darla's situation became too difficult for her to cope with and she tried to hide in drugs and partying so she would not have to acknowledge the pain. Darla moved to the Hardtown to be closer to her friends and further away from her ex-boyfriend.

Darla confesses that she is very suspicious, manipulative and cold in her relationships with men due to her experiences and sees them (in her own words) only as toys to be played with and then discarded at will. Paradoxically, she met a man who became a long time boyfriend and Darla and her son subsequently moved in with him. They spent the next two to three years together but Darla left him, during her last years in university, because of his abusive nature. When she graduated, she applied for a well-paid profession in Manchester. She was offered good employment and quickly moved down to Manchester, settling herself and her son into a rented house in the suburbs.

Darla lived in the Hardtown intermittently for her first 25 years.

Darla finds it hard to fully define where she belongs within the British class system. In her short life, she has managed to range from the lowest to one of the higher positions within the community hierarchy. She is presently employed in a well-paid profession, with excellent potential for advancement, and is considered as a success story by the community centre staff and other officials.

Before she moved to Manchester, Darla used to attend the GRcc infrequently- only a few times each week. She used to come in to see friends now and then, to buy drugs, stolen goods or to leave her son at the playgroup. Darla was also an infrequent member of the one-parent group. Since moving to London, she occasionally comes in to the GRcc to meet up with childhood friends whenever she comes up to Dundee. However, she is generally considered (and talked about) within the community centre as a stranger and outsider to the community, who has turned her back on them and their way of life.

### Sandra

Sandra, a divorced single mother of two, is my fifth informant. She is of average height with long, curly hair, ranging from light to dark brown. Her face is pretty with light brown-green eyes.

The stains on her teeth show that she is a smoker but unlike most other individuals within the Hardtown, she has no rotten or otherwise damaged teeth. Sandra, who is a caring and loving woman, bounces between her fun-loving, talkative side and a quieter, much more contemplative (and occasionally very depressed) personality.

She is a highly intelligent, analytical and sensitive individual who sometimes finds it hard to face daily life and is prone to periodic depression. Sandra has a stubborn streak and constant mood swings that lead to episodes when she is a veritable recluse. These problems

make it hard for her to maintain friendships. She has tried to commit suicide several times and is dependent on tranquillisers, anti-depressants and hash.

Sandra's grandparents worked sporadically as non-skilled industrial workers who instilled the virtues of hard work into her parents at an early age. Her parents managed to improve their socio-economic status and reached the level of upper-middle-class through years of hard work<sup>142</sup>. Both her parents had very well paid jobs before they retired. Her brother is in well-paid upper-middle-class employment. Sandra has often expressed the opinion that she has disappointed both of her parents. She is ashamed of her situation and feels that she could have done much better for herself.

Sandra is divorced and only sees her ex-husband when he comes to pick up their daughters for a few days together. Long after their divorce, the relationship between Sandra and her ex-husband is still tempestuous. She spends a lot of time on the Internet chatting to many individuals around the world - her emotional lifeline.

Sandra currently resides in a council estate near the Hardtown. Her poverty, drug dependency, the frequent shopping at the informal market in the Hardtown and the infrequent visits to the GRcc means that the regular frequenters usually talk of her as someone that belongs on the scene. At other times, Sandra's presence and behaviour have acted as a safety valve. For example, I found Sandra to be more verbal and outspoken than most other council estate dwellers. Her tales and gossip from her previous middle-class existence provide an interesting contrast to the everyday life found on the council estate. All of these factors facilitated her inclusion in the ethnographic narrative.

Her connection to the informal black market is through buying stolen goods and hash from Hardtown dealers as well as friendship with the individuals who participate in different ways in the informal market.

She is presently unemployed and living on social security benefit in a flat provided by the council. Money is short and her daily life is a struggle. She is also heavily in debt and relies on financial help from her wealthy parents. Sandra herself defines herself as a marginal stigmatised individual dominated by poverty and insecurity, dependent on the charity of the state and her family.

Sandra is an irregular and infrequent visitor to the community centre. This frequency differs from day to day and week to week. At times, she might spend several days in a row at the community centre and then suddenly might not turn up for a week or two. Sandra frequents the GRcc to meet friends and to buy cheap and nourishing food for herself and her daughters. She also goes there to buy drugs and other illegal goods.

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<sup>142</sup> As mentioned above, her grandparents were hardworking factory workers. Sandra's parents managed through hard work and intelligence to climb several steps up the socio-economical ladder. They moved to one of the most affluent areas of Dundee, and purchased a fine house in which they raised Sandra and her brother. They provided their children with all the advantages that their new socio-economic position could offer. The son was sent away to boarding school but Sandra, who was a sickly child, stayed at home and attended the best school the area offered.

**FRAGMENTED IMAGES: A day in a single parent's life - The creation of boredom**

I remember how it first looked and smelled that morning and how I felt when I walked in the entrance of the high-rise! With the stale stench of urine all around, my first thought was 'God; do they ever have cleaners around to clean the lifts or corridors here?' Feeling rather unfair and judgmental, I have to admit that I regretted my previously hasty thought when I finally found myself in front of the door that I assumed was Jane's. It is hard to be certain who lives where in the dingy corridors of this high-rise since none of the doors have any separating features apart from the grime and peeling paint. The doors have no names, no distinguishing signs and no letters or numbers that would simplify a search for a specific abode.

*Jane- Diana is such a fucking pain. She dinna ken wha a problem eh ha wie kippin like. That bitch is ever trying to gi us ut of bed, like. For wha! So eh can sit in the huse and gi bored and then come here and gi bored, ken. Eh am tired all the fucking time. Eh never get enough sleep like and would like to just be left ken. Di yea ken what eh mean like? Eh gi up and me pain just starts. Di only time eh am nea feeling like shit is when eh is kippin like. Or when eh was getting really and well good high. He, he. Di only thing eh has is the pain and di same shit all the time. Eh es so tired of di boredom like. Ken wha eh mean like. Diana and eh goes to tha centre every fucking day and before tha every arsen morn is tha same like. Well at least she makes us some splifs and a cupper before eh git up like.*

As I walked through the front door into their flat, the first thing that met my eyes was a heap of dusty bags and boxes, which I later found comprised some of the 'acquired' items that they had not yet sold.

The dusky and dark hallway, with no light fixture or lamp, led into a room that made me think of the thief's den from the book 'Oliver Twist'. I am not suggesting by this that it was old fashioned, but rather that it was a place that reminded me of the tattered treasure room of the king of thieves. The room was dark, dusty and dirty. I was pondering where to sit down to avoid the worst dirt when I was offered a cup of tea by Diana. I was rather dubious with regard to the cleanliness of their kitchen and cups, but thought it unwise to decline.

I sat down on the well-worn and dirty sofa and tried to hold a conversation as well as look discreetly around the room. It was a strange room, made up from both cheap and more luxurious materials like a poor man's chessboard. The floor was covered by a multitude of non-matching odd bits of carpets, ranging from worn through cheap-looking bright colours to subtler, thicker and more luxurious pieces of carpet. In terms of colour alone, these strange combinations made me feel nauseous; like an acute acid-flashback. The walls had not fared better and were a similar combination of colour and paper gone wrong. Through wear and tear (and with the special help of a crazy bird), the wallpaper was both dirty and torn. No lamps or fittings were complete because of parties and again the crazy and very destructive bird that saw the flat and its content as his private playpen. The items in the flat were a collection of cheap plastic and porcelain ornaments and more expensive 'acquired' stereos, a video, a large screen TV and an over-flowing CD rack. The spaces behind chairs and the sofa were also seemingly considered as the perfect storage place for smaller 'acquired' goods. These were presumably crammed behind there to avoid detection by wandering eyes - or perhaps only so that no one would trip and fall over them. The rest of the rooms in the flat were a copy of the sitting room



and generally seemed not to be cleaner or better kept. For instance, the bathroom was a frightful sight<sup>143</sup>. Even for someone who has travelled through the Indian countryside, the whole place was black with dirt and smelled of dirt and urine.

*Diana- Eh wish tha she wouldnea try to smoke as much dope before going ut to di centre, like. Di tha fuckers di gi us a warning before, like! Di ya ken abut tha! And di all ken she smokes all di time an all. Eh ken tha eh smoke to, but she dinna ken when to stop, an eh do! Eh mean with all di other stuff she takes everyday she is so fucking gone like tha it's fucking clear tha she is on something, like. Eh dinna touch nought! Well apart from hash like. And uppers and downers ken. It is nea tha much abut here ken and most of us are on tha, if nea on mere ken? Eh am nea like her, ken. Eh am nea a druggy, like. But ken eh need it like. Eh need it for di boredom like or eh canna deal wi it all ken. Eh is just hard bein like this! Eh just feel tired all the time ken?*

Everyone in the one-parent group seems to hate mornings and most of their morning rituals do seem very similar to each other's.

Most of the time Diana, Jane and I are the first people from our group to turn up at the GRcc. Around eleven or so, when most of the elderly customers begin to leave, the three of us walk through the door and take our (usual) seats around our (usual) table. We say hi (to those worth saying hi to), check whose turn it is to buy the large pot of tea then one of us goes to get the pot and three mugs. For the next hour or so, our conversation will be mainly about the three of us at a very intimate and private level, which will dissipate as soon as others arrive.

*Jane - Po di ye ken where di others have gone to like? Eh would guess they ave something be 'er te do than si 'in abut here, ken. Di ye ken if there any'hing tha we ha missed, like a trip or so? Eh love going on these here trips with di group ken. Di do right frigh'en me like, but eh dinna wanna miss one nei'er, if ye ken what eh mean. Well Po, ye do ken what eh mean like? In this place every fucking day is the same. Eh get out of bed, have a smoke, take meh pills and then come here to drink some tea and sit abut on my arse and talk abut how boring eh all is. Its not like it's like the fucking funfair or nothing ken. (laughing!) Well at least we can see folk here, like, even if the staff here are fuckers and treat us like shit.*

The main daily topic of discussion at our table is about how boring everything is, how we hate the centre and its staff as well as the community. Usually, this then develops into the pressures and stresses of the everyday financial difficulties we are faced with; how badly the social services, doctors and the police treat us. At times we also talk of people's children, sex, new things people are selling and, always, of violence and fights. When the table is full, such private and intimate questions are seldom discussed and if any are broached when individuals who do not belong to the 'group' are there, some people simply walk away.

By the end of the day, everyone around the table has usually purchased a pot of tea but, if anyone is extra-low on funds, others will step in and offer a sub or to buy your round (as it is jokingly referred to by some) - provided you belong within the nuclear group around Diana's table. The large teapots are recycled time after time until there is no longer any chance of squeezing any flavour out of the tea. At the start, I was oblivious of this practice and took the

<sup>143</sup> The walls were dirty and the wallpaper torn. The room was murky and had no lamps or windows. The WC (which I had to use as I did not want to offend anyone by not flushing) did not even have a seat, only the soiled and stench-entrenched toilet itself.

pots away before they were properly 'finished', something that was noticed with great irritation and sarcasm. 'Oh! Eh dinna ken tha yer are so rich ye can throw away money like tha ken'.

*Diana - Every fucking day is the fucking same ye ken. Yer here Jane and eh am here and di others di show up if di fucking wanna. Well tha is eh mean, ye Po are OK, like. Ye spend as much time here as us. But it's just tha same, all tha same. Si'ing and gawking at each other from this shitty table in this shitty centre. Eh ha'e it here di ya ken. No 'in fucking changes ever and if it does eh is always bad news. Like. It's all boring ken. The centre is boring, the toun is boring, she is boring, meh life is boring eh is all fucking boring, like. So now em always at the centre or she sends us to the corner shop or the doctor or such to git things for her. Eh is doing me fucking head in, ken. Eh have no fucking life and always have to be with that bitch, ken. I just wanna git a job again. Eh ken that Jane dinna wanna have one. Well, fuck she din't ever have one. She is such a fucking lazy bitch. She is a fucking pain. Just a waste of space really! Hee, hee. Eh should be with someone else mind ye. Someone smart and teckel! Nea someone like her. Everyone tells us so.*

Diana and Jane are the most frequent and reliable frequenters of the community centre and at the one-parent group. Their table is the focus of the community centre and gaining a permanent seat around it takes a lot of time, patience and Diana's approval. Diana is the hub around which most of the community centre's illegal activities are focused. She is aware of which individuals do what, sell what and decides in many instances who is allowed to use the centre for minor illegal activities, like trading stolen goods. Diana is the most verbally and physically aggressive and violent person at the centre and is the person who most often has enough courage to contradict or openly question orders given by the staff at the community centre. Like everyone else she loves recounting her ferocious previous battles and brags how she keeps Jane under her power by threatening her with beatings and administering them if need be (and even if it is not needed at times). In that light, it is interesting to mention that, during a week where Jane and Diana had fought endlessly, both turned up one day looking very sheepish and with Diana sporting a huge black eye. She tried to explain this away as an accident acquired in a fight with a bus door!

Many other individuals frequent the centre on a more or less daily basis, but do not take such an active part in all its activities as Diana and Jane. Many just pop in for a short while, have a quick bite to eat and have a chat or, sometimes, stay at our table all day. This can depend on what time of the month it is, how their finances are and if their lives have changed at all. Some of those who regularly frequent Diana and Jane's table usually try to arrive at the GRcc around 11 o'clock and rarely leave before the children are about to leave school around 3 o'clock. Most of the regulars around the table either have their children meet them at the centre or pick them up at school - depending on age or if they have older siblings who can bring them to the centre.

*Hamish<sup>144</sup> - eh spend most of my time at work now. Meh life dose no longer revolve around those long days at the centre or di pub (which was more like it as nea as much women abut) planning robberies or selling stuff. No longer endless cups of tea and tasteless food or the attitude ye get from the staff. Well the attitude eh would get, like You ken what eh mean. Even though eh found it a good place for picking up di lady's like. Nea much else to do, cept*

<sup>144</sup> Hamish's language is slightly more polished, with less Hardtown slang and pronunciations than most of my Hardtown informants. Sandra and Darla (but only after she started her new job in Manchester) also speak a more polished Scottish dialect than the general Hardtowners.

*trading at times and all. Di centre is just so mixed an all; boring and at the same time ye ken all tha came there like.*

*Eh! Shit I mean I have even worked on my language and its getting be'er all the time, but eh still use some words and can't get away from it totally. Especially if eh am around the centre a day or so. Eh just feel like the staff was only trying to use it to get to you and use you. Ken wha eh mean?*

*Now eh am trying to be good! No! Eh mean it! Eh want to be the best dad to me son, the best social worker ye can get, the best friend and a good person an all. Nea more of the bad me! Well in most areas tha is, hee hee. Eh would nea mind being a bit naughty around some people if you ken what eh mean? (Putting his hand on my arm and winking at me). Eh just do not wanna be that person again so that is why eh didn't wanna meet at the centre today. That and well since eh wanted us to be able to talk properly and eh cannot talk with ye really around the others. Not like this! Properly mind you.*

*I do miss the long pool games eh used to play all day at the centre and some of the old friends at times, but eh am happy with my choice most of the time. It's just a bit lonely mind you, but that is my choice. But then eh am nea like that bitch Darla.*

There he goes again - stopping me thinking about anything else! Oh my, please save me! Not again! We are not going to talk - correction - slag off Darla again! I am so fed up talking about or listening to everyone talking about her. Darla! Bitch! Traitor! Over and over again! Oh yes there we go again! Don't mind me! I will just sit here listening to some of my main informants bad mouthing one of my others! (During a constant barrage of bitching it is even hard for an anthropologist to listen with complete attention and not allow the mind to wander as my private thoughts above indicate).

*Darla - God what is my life like really? It has changed so much during the last fucking years. Eh used to spend everyday at the centre, trading stuff, talking with mates and making out like. Then eh got a kid and it changed like. Eh had to take care of him ken and came to the centre at times, but it just wasn't the same mind you.*

*And now eh come back to see the family at times. Do ye ken how well I am doing now! The work is going fine and eh am happy and its all fine like.*

*Well now when eh come back to see friends at the centre ken they are all bitchy mind you. They all are being fucking arses to me and treat my really bad like.*

*But it's not like eh mind like. Well not really mind you its just cause they are jealous. They still are stuck in this shit hole, doing the same shitty things and being the same losers while I got out. So if they have a problem with me! Fuck them! It's theirs and I don't give a fuck about those boring bitches (cf. success in Chapter 5).*

Sitting at Sandra's again! She is stoned, looks sleepy but is talking about going up to the community centre. Well maybe we could, but should we after she has been smoking this much hash? Well, she seems to have made up her mind so I guess that is it. She is feeling pretty good though at the moment, which is good. She has had no really bad spell of depression for a while. I guess her new medication is better the previous medication the doctor prescribed. (As a researcher it is hard not to let your mind consider everyone's motive or the effect of an ongoing conversation as it develops).

*Sandra - I guess my day really starts when I have dropped my daughters at school, but God is it ever a struggle to get them there in time. I mean nine a clock in the morning it is devilishly early and I am not a morning person. I do most of the time manage to get them there on time. After that I usually go home and sleep for a while and if I am feeling depressed and*



*am in a low I find it hard to do anything but to sleep. I do try and tidy up the flat and to run errands and to do the shopping before picking Lisa and Stephanie up from school again at three o'clock. I guess my life isn't really that exciting but most of the time it's not too bad. At least I am not working in a boring job with people I do not like. I love it when they are away during the weekends with their dad, since it gives me lots of time to do my own thing. I get to read, watch movies, go on the Internet and talk to friends. Strangely enough I do miss them when they are away for too long and I am glad that they do not stay at their dad's over night anymore.*

*I do go up to the centre with you and a few others to have a chat and a cup of coffee. It is fun to go there now and then, but I don't think I could spend as much time there as you. I mean they are a bit rough there aren't they? I'm not into the whole group thing though! I do not like commitment. I like to be able to do what I want at the spur of the moment. And if I had to choose between sitting at home, doing what I felt like at the time, while smoking splifs and joining a group, the choice is obvious. God this just makes me realise how boring it all is. I need this time chilling out by myself.*

It is really strange that people's lives can be so similar in some ways yet dissimilar in others. The usual ordinary evenings that I have spent with my main informants seem, in some ways, to be very similar indeed.

Diana and Jane just look at me with rather fuzzy eyes and, strangely enough, are not doing anything at all. They just seem to sit in their flat and smoke. I mean, even they admit that their son goes out more than they do.

*Diana – we dinna go out much. Well wie a kid ye canna do that ken. Ye ha to be in di hus with him like. Eh dinna like him going out too late nei'her. Eh, ken tha eh is boring, but wha can yea do? We dinna do too much after tha ken. Well ye have spent evenings at our hus ken so di ken wha we are up to like. Eh am the only one doing any'in ken. As usual that bitch just sits abut doing fuck all and getting off her face like. Eh make the tea ken and the cups of tea mind yea. Fuck eh even roll her fucking joints. Eh mybe eh should be glad she is not too fucking lazy to smoke them by herself ken, hee, hee.*

*Well sometimes my cousin or some other relative comes by for a smoke or with a carry out, but that is as much fun as we get now days ken.*

*Mind ye eh di like going out for a fight or a walk in the shops with me sister. Well ge"ing things to trade is fun. Gi's a bit of a thrill and eh loves a good fight ken. Ken, giving that bitch a good kicking is the only way to get her to do anything ken.*

Jane leans over towards me after Diana has just left the room and tells me that she knows that Diana is cheating on her. While she is telling me this, she shows no sign of any great emotion or feeling. She just looks the same as usual, tired, gaunt and with unfocused, dazed eyes.

*Jane – eh just feel so depressed. Eh feel that if eh dinna have the kid eh would be dead by now ken. Well its not like anyone would give a fuck! Diana is just a fucking cheating bitch and eh can nea trust her or anyone ken.*

*She always talk of fighting its not like she is fucking mr kung fu ken. She is ok, but the respect comes from her family ken. She kens that if anyone does fuck all to her or us di will either kick the fuck out of them or kill them. My life is crap ken. But eh think the worst is the fucking boredom ken. Eh gi up, smoke some joints, eh go to the centre, eh go home and smoke some*



*joints and that is it. Nothing else going on if yea ken what eh mean, like. My life is shit and nothing happens apart from more shit.*

*My family would nea give a fuck if eh died. Nea one would. Eh am fucking lonely in a fucking lonely world. No wonder eh feel depressed and take drugs to make it be 'er, ken. Eh do like it when Lana (Diana's cousin) and her lad come over to the flat or when we go over to theirs ken. Well its more fun to smoke with others than sitting by ourselves doing fuck all.*

Hamish is not fond of having guests over for visits in the evening. This seems strange, as Hamish appears to be such an open and hospitable person in comparison with many others in the one-parent group. But he really is thoroughly opposed to having anyone other than his best friend in the house during the evenings. He is very much aware of his living situation and wants to keep his private life strictly private to make sure it was the best environment possible for his son. Hamish leans over the table and put his hand lightly on my arm while asking me out for a dinner and a bottle of wine. Jokingly, he tells me that he does not usually have guests over, but he will make an exception for me since I am his type of woman.

*Hamish – eh dinna go out much nea more. Eh spend my time at home with Peter and eh really like it like that. The weeks that Peter is with his mum eh work late and occasionally go to the pub with some mates. Eh am just trying to stay out of harms way and not to get in to any sort of trouble. And if eh would see any of me former mates in the evenings eh would get trouble faster than fleas on a dog.*

*Its great in the evenings when eh have Peter. He is always happy to get collected from the sitter or school and I love the time we have together in the evening. Eh do not go out no more. Well nea more to any of the big parties and such. Eh spend my time and money on Peter. Eh have been out stomping and getting wasted twice during this year. Not bad for a guy who used to be the worst guy in town and who used to party non-stop every night. My weekends don't change much from the weekdays, but we do try to visit my mother in the Ferry during weekends. It's important to be with your family. I learnt the importance of this after I got Peter.*

*Eh its fun eh used to be the regular bad guy. Worst you could find and now eh am the home dad that doesn't want to do nothing but be with his kid. Ironical isn't it? Its not like I am complaining or nothing. I like my life now. I am trying hard to be the best dad eh can be for Peter. Well as good as that bitch of an ex-girlfriend will let me. She is such a controlling cow and tries to stop Peter and me from having a good relationship. Not like she will succeed, mind you.*

Darla spends her weekdays in her house smoking joints and selling dope. She keeps her rule that she only sees men after her son is in bed or at the weekends, since she does not want him to meet them.

Darla phones and wants me to come over to save her (as she puts it) from her son's father who had turned up at her door unexpectedly and has since refused to leave. I promise to come over and take a taxi there. She meets me at the door, looking so stressed out that she is totally pale. Her bouncy curly hair almost hits me in the eyes as she leans in to whisper (in a rather high pitched tone of voice) why she needs my help, while at the same time giving me a welcoming kiss that reeks of stress and hash. Her flat is a reflection of her personality, a combination of bright colour and repainted furniture, decorated artistically (yet amateurishly) by her own hand – a bold attempt to create an environment fit for short spells of study and weekends of hilarious bungee jumps of drugs and sex.

*Darla - evenings suck until eh have put him to bed and can have a breather. Don't get me wrong eh love him ken, but eh like my space too. Its hard doing a degree and bringing up a kid by yourself and eh am working at it. Still it is hard and its nacking on you. I hurry to Uni, I hurry home to pick up the kid from school or a sitter, make tea, get him to play and put him in bed. Eh dinna ken how I get time for it all. Eh wish I could do more with him and for him. Well that is why eh am taking this job in London ken. Eh am making a better future for us both. He will not have the same shit to deal with as me. It's just hard to be a good mum in the evenings when you are really tired, but I try. When he is at home or up I dinna touch drugs (apart from the occasional joint that is) or have men about the house. Well it's our time and I don't want him to learn bad things. But after he is in bed eh do smoke quite a bit of dope and sometimes have friends over for a drink and a smoke. Only friends mind you!*

*During the weekends it's all different though. Less boring! Well, he is away and I have fun just being me and getting wasted. Its just non-stop partying with loads of drugs, dancing and sex. The more the better. Hey do you know I actually took ten E's last weekend and ended up taking some blow on top of that and still I was rather ok. I guess I am getting used to the scene.*

Sandra does not go out much at all. She spends most days in her flat and seldom goes out in the evenings. Sandra phones me at home hours after her daughters have fallen asleep and asks if I feel like coming over for a cup of tea and a chat. It is just as late as the last few times she has called. The time is past two at night and I was sound asleep when the phone rang. She sounds rather edgy and says she needs to talk to someone, since she is starting to feel rather bad. I can hear from the way her voice sounds that she has been crying again and tell her I will be over as soon as I can put on some clothes.

*Sandra - it is not like your life as a single mother is the most exciting and fun filled thing in the world you know! It is hard to raise children by yourself. Damn hard! Sometimes I have no idea how I make it from one day to another. At least I am honest about it and admit that it is hard and that as a single parent you have no money and are always living in debt. I haven't met one single parent that doesn't have financial problems or that scams the social for that reason. Well most people do in one way or the other don't they. I guess I shouldn't complain anyhow! I have it better than most of the other single mothers I have met. At least my ex husband wants to see his daughters and takes them out on the weekends. And I even have parents that help me out babysitting and with money at times, which is a lot more than most others have. I also have a great best friend who is there for me whenever I need someone to talk to. So I might be better off than many others in my situation who have no one. It's just that it doesn't feel like that most of the time you know. I feel crap most of the time and my depression comes and goes. But when they are bad it's just impossible to think positively about anything. And the constant lack of money and forever being in debt is hard you know. It strains you and makes you nervous and makes you consider every few pence that you spend. Strangely enough I do like the time I get to think though when I am by myself during the day or when the little madams have finally gone to sleep and at times I would not want to change it for anything. I guess I am just feeling lonely for some thing or someone, but am fully aware that I will not meet someone that will be right for me or that I would want to be with so I have decided to give up on men. I mean I don't think the man I want and need actually exists you know so what is the point in fooling yourself.*

*I am trying to be a good mother though! I have got learning programs for the computer for them and we work them together and try to get enough time alone with them everyday. I mean if it weren't for the girls I would have killed myself by now. But I feel that I cannot do that to them. That would not be fair on them.*

### **Boredom and the community centre**

The ennui portrayed in the above fragmented imagery suggests it can be considered to hold several rather dichotomised faces, on several possible levels. But first, I need to consider how much of the constant expression of boredom is an act?

I found that all levels of communication within the Hardtown were dependent on individual status and reputation. The function of anyone constantly engaging in expressions of boredom can, in some ways, be considered a necessary and vital behaviour for an individual in the Hardtown. Hardtowners in this way display strength, honour and a lack of fear, towards fellow Hardtown inhabitants, the frequenters of the community centre and especially, towards outside forces and agencies. Boredom is embodied in this way as a means to refute or detach any fears, pressure and stress felt by these individuals. This is particularly noticeable as these expressions of boredom even continue in the most potentially dangerous situations, such as illegal activities and interactions with outside forces and institutions.

Ennui is most often expressed in discussions regarding employment and mainstream society. A feeling of complete boredom is expressed towards mainstream notions and ideas, particularly when it relates to the (low) expectations of my informants. Within the Hardtown informants' normal expressions of boredom, I consistently find the dichotomy that, while they feel that mainstream society owes them something, the same society has done them wrong. Paradoxically, this is often coupled with their own estimation of themselves as self-made men or women through the informal market – a concept so succinctly expressed by Joseph Heller in *Catch-22*:

*"He was a self-made man who owed his lack of success to nobody."*

Hardtowners seem to find expressions of boredom one of the more readily available and locally acceptable of public behaviours in dealing with the fear, paranoia and violent fragmentation they met on a daily basis in their lives<sup>145</sup>.

However, I found that most Hardtowners did not readily admit to feeling stress, fear, isolation or pressure in front of others. My informants' behaviour clearly articulated that the expression of such feelings would itself be interpreted as a sign of weakness, which could and would be exploited by others in the community. Many of my informants also reasoned that the expression of such feelings would negatively affect their reputation and status within the community, even among their own family or friends. The repeated emphasis on and airing of individual boredom may be a way for them to refute any notions and feelings of stress or fear.

Moreover, I propose that, when my informants boldly state: 'They bore me', they are also displaying the notion of being in control and showing strength in what my informants described as a dangerous and stressful environment. More explicitly, they are displaying a disregard of what they deem to be a threat by 'giving someone the finger', as one of my informants expressed it. I suggest that this behaviour can be interpreted as a way of reshaping, redefining and superficially taming the stress and fear born out of the insecure, violent and ever-changing environment.

<sup>145</sup> For many informants, boredom became a tool to deal with an environment where individuals were expected to cope with stress and pressure, from both within and without the community.



Strikingly, I find the overall image depicted and expressed by most of the frequenters of the GRcc suggests a shared feeling of consistent, continual and everyday boredom<sup>146</sup>. Their limited resources force them to alleviate this boredom with 'antisocial' activities such as using drugs or taking part in illegal trading or violence.

On one level, it is interesting to consider the notion of a manufacturing of boredom as well as a construction of a place for boredom (spatial and emotional) within a fragmented and dichotomised community and without a stable communal cohesion. A great deal of research in the urban community environment has suggested that this lack of community cohesion often leads to an increase in violence, alienation, insecurity and lack of trust. This is reflected in the dichotomised, fragmented and highly paranoid suspicion rife within the daily Hardtown exchanges.

In addition, I propose that imagination (perhaps even projection) and a behaviour that emphasises strength as well as lack of fear through the tool of (almost) collective boredom has its place within the Hardtown urban context. It may be considered as an individual, as well as (almost) communal manifestation of, detachment from fear and marginalisation. Consider the disregard many of my informants feel for mainstream media and its institutions continually showing them in everyday encounters with an expression and demonstration of ennui.

For example, Nigel Rapport and Joanna Overing (2000) suggest that:

*"... The deterritorialization of ideas, images and opportunities brought about by mass communication enables people to lead complex lives more of projection and imagination than enactment of prediction" (ibid: 213).*

The discussion at the start of this section also mirrors these fragmented images: the style of irony and sarcasm, commonly used in the Hardtown, also addresses the never-ending presence of boredom and opposition to external forces in their daily lives.

For example, John Berger considers the near-universal use of irony as a facilitation of 'displacement and detachment' and:

*"... [T]he human condition actually is more or less a constant: always in face of the same mysteries, the same dilemmas, the same temptation to despair, and always armed unexpectedly with the same energy" (cited in Rapport and Overing 2000:213).*

Conversely, consider also that this (spatially and emotionally) safe space of boredom seems to be intrinsically coupled with an ironic and sarcastic verbal struggle - perhaps meant to further detach and displace the Hardtown individual from the here and now. I propose that the adoption of this attitude also detaches them from the ever-changing, violent and stressful nature of their lives, even within such a so-called safe environment as the community centre.

In addition, I feel that my informants' expressions of boredom were the result of the Hardtown experience, where the only thing that was constant was the inconstancy of it all<sup>147</sup>.

<sup>146</sup> The pictures shown in these five life histories describe an everyday existence, with an intrinsic emphasis placed on feelings of loneliness, alienation and the struggle of subsistence life on a giro-wage. These feelings mean that most spend long periods expressing boredom, while a few live their whole lives in complete ennui.

<sup>147</sup> This is my own interpretation of what my informants might express.



Many of my informants found that this individual and communal notion of boredom was simultaneously empowering, ambiguous and fragmented. It was viewed as an important, but unstable parable of their relations with and towards internal and external pressures as well as an indicator of personal feelings of stress. This was also closely fused into their contextual moral constructions, dependent on their local identities and alliances but also allowing them a considerable degree of fluidity. As illustrated above, the presence and verbalisation of a daily sense of boredom both empowered individuals yet allowed them to become detached from these same feelings of boredom. This fragmented mosaic<sup>148</sup> illustrates how Hardtowners found expressions of boredom were necessary to deal with stress and fear.

Consider the lack of trust and paranoid suspicion flourishing within the community. Consider also how the individual Hardtown notions and behaviour, with their foundation in expressions of boredom, seem to diminish and make light of these stressful pressures by displacing them or simply ignoring them. By expressing boredom, they (somehow) pretend that it is not there - it is abated and reduced and can therefore not hurt them. I propose that, when the Hardtowners state; 'I am bored and therefore not afraid', this removes the fear and stress, transforming it to a much more manageable expression and behaviour, worth almost its own notion of morality.

Linking Hardtowners' boredom with a culture of suspicion or distrust (cf. Chapter 4), I turn to Annette Baier's (1994/5) notions of morality and trust. Paraphrasing her work, she holds that, if a theory of morality is constructed in principles on exact or formal issues of trust (I add deservedness) that this might have its own 'categorical imperative' (ibid: 152-82). This also contains an instrumentality that might lead to a fear and distrust<sup>149</sup> of the agents/agencies that promote distrust (i.e. governmental moral-political rhetoric against single-mothers). Baier (1994/5:172-3) also notes that even the agreements of the contact situation rely implicitly on an assumption of trust

Compare, for example, the informants' views of the community centre as a place that is merely safe on the surface with the staff's notion of a safe space<sup>150</sup> (cf. Chapter 2). I found below-the-surface power struggles, fights, dealings in stolen goods and much more, fostering the same lack of trust and general stressed-out paranoia as found in the rest of the Hardtown landscape. This seems to emphasise to the frequenters that no place is safe, while at the same time advances the notion that it would be criminally insane for an individual to want to live there<sup>151</sup>.

Some traders consider that the community centre's safety measures, such as cameras, are an excellent safety precaution in that it makes it easier to exchange illegal goods under the table and ensures that there is no evidence on tape that anything illegal has gone on. This lends a limited idea of safety to the informal market trading within the community. However, most of my informants feel that the 'safety' that the centre staff talk about is more oriented to keeping the staff safe from them and not the opposite. Paradoxically, the Hardtowners' also see the use of cameras as a threat and a manifestation of a lack of trust, fear and paranoia by the staff. In addition, I propose that the GRcc frequenters' expressions of boredom may be a device to demonstrate to the centre's staff that they are neither intimidated nor subjugated by the centre's

<sup>148</sup> This fragmentation is linked to a consistent local and individual rebelling, (expressed as empowering), against both internal and external power and powers (institutions, notions and individuals).

<sup>149</sup> This includes the fear and suspicion that turns the security of the supposedly safe spaces into a lack of security.

<sup>150</sup> This area has supposedly been made safer than others within the community by the staff's safety measures.

<sup>151</sup> An idea expressed by my informants at the community centre (cf. culture of suspicion in Chapter 4).

safety measures. By contrast, the Hardtowners interpret the safety measures as an expression of fear and weakness of the part of the staff – exposing their vulnerability, even within this so-called safe environment.

In the Hardtowners behaviour, I find a shared, public foundation in the daily continual presence of boredom. On this basis, boredom is constructed as an intrinsic, individual and communal way to express togetherness or closeness as well as opposition and empowerment, together with a disregard for fears and distrust. This foundation expresses an ambiguous division and inclusion as well as detachment, which converge on Hardtown:

*"...Focus instead on how 'people shape the city through their everyday resourcefulness' (Cohen 1993:8), image the city in their ongoing experience of it and supply it with meaning in the context of their personal circumstances" (Rapport and Overing 2000:379).*

At the same time, I propose that, even in this urban environment, devoid of a stable, distinct and un-fragmented communal cohesion, a public and protected locality such as the community centre still offers a comparatively safe, fixed and cohesive milieu. This seems to be true, even within the context of the near-continuous presence of spatial and dichotomised power-games. However, considering the individual's mistrust of others, I take the expressed boredom a step further and regard it as a tool for detachment and empowerment.

It is not merely the centre's rules and security cameras that help create the illusion of a safer environment within the community centre; as Chapter 2 has demonstrated, these can be easily circumvented. No, what is interesting is that, instead of helping to create the notion of personal safety and trust, these measures actually promote the lack of mutual safety and trust. This is where the continuous expression of boredom is suggested as a tool that transforms and creates the illusion of safety. This is an act that shows to others each individual's lack of fear and helps create a certain degree of togetherness in their trust or lack of trust. Still, how deep such an illusion or act can penetrate is highly fluid and would depend on the skill of the actor or actors. The behaviour of the informants implies that this is often only skin deep, but is still seen as a necessity. This helps convey to others a lack of fear and a shared notion of trust in a violent community based on a persistent feeling of distrust. If you play the game well, you may gain status and may also gain both new trading possibilities as well as add to your own reputation within the community.

Some Hardtowners consider that the community centre is not part of the community. This is not only because of the security measures, staff and rules of the place itself but also because it is seen as a manifestation of mainstream notions and is run by an outside agency. It is interesting to note that some of my informants talk of enjoying a transient feeling of temporary safety within the community centre: *Eh if anyone wanna git yea, ken. If di wanna waste yea, di can git yea anywhere! Yer hus! Di toun! Di centre! Eh dinna ma"er who yea are and where yea are, yer never safe, ken. It can be yer own family an all, ye can nea ken wi 'hout playing tha game! So being safe at di centre or tha it would be safe like it is a fucking joke, ken! Di canna di nothing to keep nea one safe here like.*

The expression of boredom is perhaps a necessary tool as it may be thought to contain social functions of shared illusions of trust or a togetherness in a lack of safety - for the ritual performance of verbal violence, gossip and illegal trading. This public expression, and the space in which it is acted out (the community centre) may be considered as facilitating the construction of networks of exchange, based on a superficial and temporary shared notion of

trust, safety and togetherness within this otherwise highly dichotomised and fragmented community. The community centre takes on one side on the role of a locality of public and communal cohesion, offering a place where all social Hardtown groups can share in ritual communal performances of violence, communication and trading. Paradoxically, it is also seen as a space outside the community and therefore very dangerous, because of its perceived close co-operation with the police, social service staff and informants. Ironically, I found that my informants seemed to feel that the community centre offered them the time and space to express and discuss such dichotomised and paradoxical notions<sup>152</sup>.

Considering this from another angle, I find that the notion of the community centre as a space outside the community may make it exempt from or outside the otherwise fragmented and ambiguous social-economic-moral realm of physical violence. Hence, even in this dichotomised environment of spatial displacement, I suggest that the security and protection of the highly criticised security cameras, staff monitoring and rules, helps in part by providing a place where Hardtowners can express notion of boredom in relative contextual safety. This idea of safety in turn allows the wider notion of boredom to continue to thrive and prosper in an environment with few of the more physical daily threats of violent change otherwise so prominent in this unstable and dichotomised community. However the notion of boredom cannot be considered exempt from the instability, violence and sudden changes in the values, meanings and rules set by the cohesive community of ennui within the community centre.

Paradoxically, the presence of security cameras (described so negatively in Chapter 2), works simultaneously as a positive influence and mechanism, securing the community centre as a locality for communality of expressed boredom and temporary safety. Even if most of my informants do not actually express such a feeling of temporary safety, I feel that Hardtowners' behaviour within the centre - compared with some places outside - proves their worth.

Should boredom then be considered as a cohesive force for security, empowerment and detachment or perhaps as a 'disease' attributed to living in poverty, consistently fighting for survival in exclusion from mainstream society on a giro-wage? I suggest that it is and can be an intrinsic combination of all these components, which shifts and changes depending on the situation and the individuals involved in it.

What I can say with a degree of certainty is that expressions of boredom play many intrinsic, often opposing, parts in the daily life and behaviour of Hardtown individuals. I found that, around Diana's table at the community centre, in the streets and in some of the flats I visited, most of my informants often professed a deep world-weariness. Paradoxically, even the 'buzz' provided by the drugs, violence and illegal acts becomes part of the wearying, everyday ritual act of talking about their ennui.

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<sup>152</sup> To be fair, I do not know if this is also expressed in other areas in the community as most of my fieldwork took place within the community centre.

### **Summary**

This chapter illustrates a day in a single parent's life – something that for many of my informants is felt or expressed as a day steeped in boredom. I found that this was a common facilitator; to a large extent, five of my informants' life histories and subsequent daily lives centred around different levels of seemingly routine everyday expressions of boredom. This was also linked to a constant struggle for power and empowerment in a marginal community.

That the boredom of their lives was widely expressed became clear during my first day at the community centre. As the above fragmented writing illustrates, the everyday presence of it in the Hardtowners' life in the GRcc was emphasised by all my informants.

The more complicated notion of the nature of boredom, which crystallised during the fieldwork's later stages, took more time to recognise and interpret as its dichotomised and often opposing structure only became evident in more complete and ongoing interpretations of the expressions of boredom. I propose that boredom in the Hardtown is not only what is often at first assumed but is also contextually a much more complicated and inconstant factor in individual behaviour and expressions. It may also be interpreted as an intricate interplay of Hardtown feelings and manifestations of togetherness and exclusion or empowerment and detachment, all working in a complex interchange of notions and expressions of boredom.



#### **4 KINSHIP: Single parent families in the Hardtown- family networks and households**

*We are afraid of truth, afraid of fortune, afraid of death, and afraid of each other.*  
- Ralph Waldo Emerson

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##### **Introduction**

In the previous three chapters, I introduced and investigated the Hardtown fieldwork setting on several levels; its general history, the Hardtown power dichotomy illustrated by spatiality within the community centre, and the life histories of my five main informants.

I continue exploring the basic organisation of the day-to-day lives experienced in the socio-economically marginal Hardtown community. With the aim of helping to visualise the Hardtowners' everyday existence better, I investigate the structure, boundaries and notions of relatedness found in the local representations of residential units, family and social networks.

As a means of de-objectifying the notions and imagery of 'otherness', I review the interconnections of the composition, actions and exchanges among the Hardtown residential units and their networks. These are examined as an embodiment and representation of the fragmented identity found within the local sphere of power. This includes a consideration of how the Hardtowners use these networks (or the lack of them) against external agencies or outsiders of their power dichotomy, such as doctors, social services and police. It also begins to interpret how Hardtowners teach each other the means of everyday survival.

In the Hardtown I feel that their opposition to constructions of marginal 'otherness' may be considered as a tool for facilitating the glorification or detachment from everyday stresses and pressures - imbued in the notion of 'otherness' as a 'product of the process of exclusion' (Rapport and Overing 2000:13).

In the course of my fieldwork in Hardtown, I often found that the biggest threats and dangers to an individual were likely to come from within his/her own community, perhaps even from his/her own residential unit, family or social networks.

I therefore pose the question: do residential units, family and social networks grow stronger or weaker in conditions of poverty?

My analysis focuses on questions such as these to determine the conditions for personal and communal fragmentation within Hardtown. Through this, I also hope to obtain and facilitate a thorough and faithful image of the Hardtown residential unit, family and social network makeup, as well as the contextual notions of relatedness within the community.

This chapter confirms the importance of kinship in the fragmentation-development cycle of the urban post-industrial society.

### **Family networks**

The definition of family in the Hardtown is broad and includes individuals within the residential unit who are both directly related by blood<sup>153</sup> or non-blood-relatives<sup>154</sup>, kinfolk and very close friends outside the household. It does not necessarily, as in C Stack's (1974:31) study, take the form of an active network, which shows daily 'interactions, providing domestic needs of children and assuring their survival'. In the Hardtown, it can be seen as a network based on several residential units consisting mainly of kinfolk, but can also involve some unrelated individuals who have, through long friendship, cooperation or love become part of one's daily life.

It is however important to note that any claim to belong to a Hardtown family does not automatically mean that the other individuals will consider him/her part of their family. Such a claim neither entitles him/her to take an active part in the family network nor does it mean that he/she is allowed to take part in the day-to-day actions of familial, economic or social interactions or support within this network.

Consider for example Jane's family situation. She considers herself to be a part of a family that includes her mother and all her siblings. On the other hand, her family does not consider Jane to belong, nor do they allow her to take an active part in the family's activities.

Many individuals within the community have lost contact with some of or all of their original family networks, typically due to mutual personal rejection and detachment. Several of my informants in the Hardtown find themselves without a family network based on blood-kinship. This leaves those individuals with the choice of trying to survive alone with no direct family network or to become part of the family network of their partner. They can also create a personal network based on kinfolk, who are not of their bloodline but are still close enough to be defined as family, and non-kin through daily interaction and co-operation.

### **Social networks**

Despite the broad definition of family I found in the Hardtown, I also found that a premium was often placed on blood-affinity. Many of my informants considered that blood-kinship was preferable to social networks in their work relationships<sup>155</sup>.

While degrees of affinity are created through friendships, partnerships and cooperation within the Hardtown social networks, most of my informants consider that these are unstable, interchangeable and very fluid arrangements.

Such affilial connections seem to be based on choices of contextual socio-economic paths, which focus on the reach or limitation that the Hardtown individual needs to negotiate as he/she concentrates on trading or swapping<sup>156</sup> goods in the local informal market.

My informants view affilial connections as mainly interpersonal and impersonal relationships, which they feel are less binding than the family networks particularly when it

<sup>153</sup> Blood-relatives include, for example, children, parents and relatives' children.

<sup>154</sup> Non-blood-relatives include, for example, the husband or wife and adoptive children.

<sup>155</sup> See chapter 5 on work relationships in the informal market.

<sup>156</sup> Swapping means stealing and selling goods that others may or not may have ordered from you.

comes to transgressing the boundaries of interaction and cooperation. This applies to domestic activities as well as in the support and fostering of dependants.

The function of such a social network is reflected in the works of Whitten and Wolfe (1974) and E Bott (1971). Paraphrasing, they suggest that such a network is based on personal choice, need and situation, which give by their affiliations an idea of the connections between individuals. Such linkages, which depend on a specific situation, condition and purpose, may constitute the basis for the mobilization of people.

In the Hardtown the fluidity and changeability of these linkages may be suggested as the factor that lends it its freedom to be of use in different contexts and on many levels. Paradoxically, I feel that this is also the reason why it is difficult to maintain for a long period of time, limiting the reach and extent to which most individuals can develop their networks of exchange and growth of power. It is important to note that, in the Hardtown, availability of choice is not itself the determining factor in most situations. As they expressed it, most of my informants felt that they were instead limited by their obvious lack of choices (see Introduction).

The descriptive value of the network model for my linking of the marginal way of life in Hardtown in a power dichotomy with state institutions is exemplified by, for instance, Bossevain (1974) and Bott (1971). They, among others, define this model as a means to confront informant dichotomies 'between what informants say as distinct from what they do, and what is actually done as distinct from what is done ideally' (cited in Rapport and Overing, 2000:292). I feel that the method also gives the opportunity to further consider the analytical importance of notions of home and the residential unit. In the Hardtown, my informants and their notion of home often seemed interconnected to their local identity, which was in turn linked to a fluid and transient spatial and temporal negotiation.

The definition of networks found in the Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology (1986) also places strong emphasis on choice, strategy or personal behaviour in the mobilisation of a network. In the Hardtown, the notion of individual choice seems for many individuals either to be (voluntarily or involuntarily) limited, removed or non-existent, with regard to social and family networks as well as, in some cases, the residential units themselves (cf. p 105). This leads me to question the subsequent emphasis placed merely on the notion of choice by for example analysts such as Wolf (1974). In noting this, such a focus may on occasion mean that one may miss or disregard the more important focus; the Hardtowners lack of choice.

I suggest instead a consideration of the local and individual range, timeframe or actual existence of mobilisation choices attributed to the socio-economically marginal individual. This is preferable in a study such as with my informant sample, where most individuals are without education, finances or a supporting family network; living within a daily, and often violent, dichotomy with institutions of dependency, such as the state and the social services. In addition, neither should one try to underestimate other influences nor parts of networks. Consider for example the constant re-negotiations and limitations I found in the personal experiences and actions within the Hardtown informants' exchange and trading networks.

I choose to work primarily with social and family networks as I feel that these contain and communicate an understanding of the 'effective social environment' and 'primary social

world' of an individual<sup>157</sup> (Elizabeth Bott, 1971:159). They also seem to give a fair appreciation of the contextual individual and communal notions and representations of relatedness. In addition, they indicate the contextual, marginal, fragmented and dichotomised identity; they also function well in connection with urban life-history studies.

### ***Hardtown networks – presentation and analysis***

This part of the chapter presents and provides examples of Hardtown residential units, family and social networks. The networks of three of my informants are used to represent the three main types of residential units found in the Hardtown community.

Most of the individuals from my sample group are officially registered and housed by Dundee city council as one-parents<sup>158</sup>. Despite these classifications, my life history studies and network maps show that many share their residential unit 'unofficially' with a partner. Using official registers and statistics would therefore result in limitations and shortcomings, which would in many cases entirely miss out or not be able to clarify or define the local residential units structure or on its activities and support on a daily basis. This means that important daily changes and activities in the Hardtown involve unofficial and non-registered relationships and connections. Examples of these include marriage or common law spouse or partner (boyfriend or girlfriend) sharing the single parent accommodation. I found that all of these factors had a profound effect on the residential unit's structure and connections as well as on the number of individuals that local notions consider as belonging within that particular residential unit<sup>159</sup>. This is why I decided to introduce and register these officially 'invisible' facts into the analysis.

I have therefore decided to consider briefly the last 10-15 years of official as well as unofficial domestic relationships and structures found in the residential units of three of my main informants. This is done in the attempt to disentangle some of the local complexity that the inaccurate information given to the social services adds to the mapping of the single parent residential unit. I feel that this leads to a better-informed and personal consideration of the structure and links encountered within the Hardtown residential units.

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<sup>157</sup> Bott (1971:159) suggests that 'that a family does not live directly in the total society, or even, in many cases, in a local community'. This view is shared by some of my Hardtown informants.

<sup>158</sup> Official records show that a one-parent is only sharing the residential unit with his/her dependent children, without any officially recognized partner living within the residential unit.

<sup>159</sup> Consider, for example, the residential unit of a man or a woman who after divorce becomes officially defined as a one-parent family, but shares custody of the dependent children with their previous partner. In this case I am faced with a situation where the single parent shares the care and nurture as well as two residential units with their dependent children. This is a situation that can be seen to constitute a link between those two households and thus complicates the simplistic image of a single parent living alone and caring for the dependent children on his/her own.



## Residential unit, family and social networks

### Hamish

Hamish is a single parent with one dependent child who lives on the outskirts of the Hardtown in a large flat. He shares this flat with his son as well as the owner of the flat. Hamish's residential unit may at first sight be considered as close-knit and narrow as well as disconnected and isolated from most outside interference.

The individuals Hamish personally includes in the description of his residential unit are his son and Damon, a friend described by Hamish as '*closer to me than a brother*'. When Damon is in Dundee<sup>160</sup>, the two of them share the residential unit and the domestic activities, including nurturing Hamish's son.

The idea of a simple, officially registered, single parent residential unit is complicated by Hamish sharing the custody of his son with Hanna, his ex-girlfriend and mother of his son, on a fortnightly basis<sup>161</sup>.

Hamish emphasises in most of our conversations that whenever his son is in his care, he has made the conscious choice to keep the residential unit's structure (of support, nurture and cooperation) distinctly close-knit and closed. *So that eh will not have anything or anyone, disturbing my time with meh son.* This unwillingness to be disturbed is manifest in an attempt by Hamish to exclude Hanna from any notion of his or his child's networks. I get the feeling that this is done to avoid and disregard Hanna's presence in his son's and his own life.

I find that the nurture and all other domestic activities of Hamish's everyday life, both within the residential unit as well as outside, are completely focused<sup>162</sup> on his son - whether or not his son is actually present in Hamish's residential unit. Hamish expresses that: '*blood is everything and nothing else matters. So I spend all my time with my son, caring for my son in my house since I do not want to miss a minute of our time together.*'

However, Hamish's present residential unit is quite different from the residential units he shared before his son's conception and birth, when he was part of Hardtown's youth-gang culture, with an active role in the local informal market and its hierarchy. He was a lone child and left his adoptive parents in Broughty Ferry to move to the Hardtown to join a gang. Many of the individuals he counted as members of this group at the time still resided at home with their parents because of their youth. During the next few years, many of the individuals he viewed as friends and members of his circle left their homes to live closely together in a few neighbouring flats. This was at a time when he was in a circle of socially widespread and multi-clustered groups of youngsters. He took an active part in daily and extensive networks, while graduating from a worthwhile member, considered to be 'in the know', to one of the gang's strongest and leading members. All of this was achieved as the result of the normal process of becoming a part of the general circuit of the Hardtown informal market by

<sup>160</sup> Damon goes abroad for long periods of time because of his career. During this time contact is irregular.

<sup>161</sup> When his son is residing with Hanna, contact between Hamish and his son is infrequent and difficult, due to the fractious relationship of the former couple.

<sup>162</sup> I feel that the considerable weight that Hamish places on his son as a focal point for his residential unit may in part have developed out of his anxiety regarding the shared custody. He attempts in this way to avoid or detach himself and his son from Hanna's role - and the role of her own networks - in the child's life.

continuously fighting to defend his own and the gang's honour and territory and by taking part in all the usual drinking parties.

### Family and social network

The only individuals that Hamish considers fully as part of his family or are seen to belong fully within his family network are his son, his adoptive mother and his long-time friend Damon. During his education and his employment as a social worker, Hamish has turned away from his previous residential unit, family and social networks of non-kin, such as gang members, hangers-on and Hardmen. Now Hamish only focuses on the importance and value of fatherhood and only acknowledges his family network as comprising his 'blood' relatives.

Hamish's notion of affiliation by blood as a defining character is interesting as he deliberately ignores the fact that his son shares his blood and Hanna's<sup>163</sup>. He consciously denies that she and any of her networks are part of his son's life or creation – despite the fact that his son regularly resides and is also raised and nurtured some of the time by her and her family. Hamish clearly does not identify her or her family (even in extension) as being any part of his own family network.

While Hamish was a gang member, an active player in the informal market<sup>164</sup> and a ferocious party animal, his social network was comparatively more extensive than his present network. He lived, ate, slept, socialised and worked within the same circles and networks as his fellow gang members. Today, his social life is quiet, restricted and mainly focused on his relationship with his son. He no longer meets his old friends or acquaintances from his past life in the gang but only socialises occasionally with a few early childhood friends<sup>165</sup>. He takes his son to visit his mother regularly but she is the only person, other than Damon, with whom they both have a close relationship and regular contact.

### Jane and Diana

Jane and Diana live together in a three-room flat in the high-rise housing behind the GRcc in the Hardtown. In the official records, Jane is the sole adult occupant of this council flat<sup>166</sup> but the fact is that this residential unit is the home of two adults. The second adult is Diana, the live-in girlfriend of Jane. Jane is the biological mother of and officially registered as the sole parent of Duncan.

The composition of this residential unit is representative of many of the households found in the Hardtown community as it unofficially contains not one, but two conventional types of residential unit. Many households do in fact contain two adults and their dependants yet are only officially acknowledged and registered by the social services and in the council statistics as containing only one adult with dependants.

<sup>163</sup> He also ignores the fact that he does not share an affiliation by blood with his adoptive mother.

<sup>164</sup> He traded, bought and sold stolen goods and drugs.

<sup>165</sup> Hamish socialises and uses drugs on occasion with Damon and five other friends, mainly childhood friends with whom he has become reacquainted, some work colleagues and one of his old friends from the Hardtown. This only takes place when his son is residing with his mother but is still not a regular occurrence.

<sup>166</sup> The flat is supplied and paid for by Dundee City Council social services.

Diana and Jane are registered separately in official council and state records as if they live at two separate addresses<sup>167</sup>. Diana is officially registered as living alone and receives her benefit cheques at a one bedroom flat on the outskirts of the Hardtown. Jane is registered as a single parent and receives benefits for herself and her son in the three-roomed flat mentioned above. I found that they in fact cohabit in Jane's flat.

Diana and Jane often argued that their main reason for the use of such deception is an economical response and strategy for domestic survival borne out of necessity from their own poverty. They explained that any acknowledgement of their cohabitation would lead to an immediate and automatic cut in both of their social security benefits. Most of my Hardtown informants often indicated that such a cut in income would severely jeopardise the bread-line existence on which they are already forced to live.

Within their actual daily residential unit Diana seems to take on the main burden of the domestic activities. In her own words, she regards herself both as Duncan's father and mother and seems to be the main nurturing and responsible adult within the household. Diana stated on many occasions that she cannot leave Jane or the flat because she would miss, worry and be afraid for Duncan's welfare as Jane is not maternal, nurturing, supportive or domestically active. Ironically, Jane often accuses Diana of the same faults.

Diana and Jane do not actively or frequently invite others to spend time in their flat, which leaves their residential unit rather isolated within the community. On the occasions when other individuals spend time there they are most usually either friends of Duncan<sup>168</sup>, relations of Diana or locals who want to buy or trade informal market goods. From time to time, Jane and Diana baby-sit some of Diana's siblings or the children of other close kin - even if Jane seems to do this rather belligerently.

Jane usually talks of Diana as being an important part of her residential unit but she often defines her household as merely containing herself and her son. However, Jane seems to regard Diana's presence in her flat and their relationship together as the defining factors, which make them a residential unit. On the other hand, she talks constantly of how little she trusts Diana, how little she think they mean to each other and how she feels that Diana cares more about her mother, siblings and previous partners than herself.

It is interesting to add that both Jane and Diana have on many occasions stated that Jane's son is the only real reason why their relationship and residential unit have lasted as long as they have. This is reminiscent of Hamish's example in its focus and emphasis on the presence of a dependent child for the structure, character and stability of a residential unit.

This residential unit seems to be dichotomously built on a combination of equal parts of emotional closeness and distance. Paradoxically, the adult members of the residence live very close together yet are closed off from each other (and from most other individuals in their lives). They are simultaneously connected and yet disconnected, which seems to lead to individual as well as domestic fragmentation, isolation and insecurity. This leaves them in a seemingly constant state of flux that, according to Diana and Jane, makes them feel close on

<sup>167</sup> Both Diana and Jane regularly receive social security reviews, which check that they reside at their officially registered addresses and that their domestic circumstances have not changed - particularly with respect to the presence of other adults, such as boyfriends or girlfriends, which would reduce their shared benefits.

<sup>168</sup> Diana and Jane do not in fact encourage Duncan to bring his friends back to their flat.



occasions but alone and fragmented at others, with the result that neither of them have a feeling of real security in their residential unit

### Family networks

Diana's contacts and relationship with her childhood residential unit are still strong, solid and close-knit. She is in constant and at times daily contact, either face-to-face or by phone, with her mother and her siblings<sup>169</sup>. Diana's brothers are known as two of the strongest Hardmen within the community, which has made this close domestic relationship even more valuable to Diana, on both a personal and community level. Her connections to several of the Hardtown's Hardmen lend financial and hierarchical reasons and goals for the continued maintenance of her close-knit relationship with her siblings by daily, face-to-face meetings.

In her early teenage years, Diana was not actively connected with any of the teenage youth gangs, which often become a new residential unit for youngsters in the community. This was probably due to the status, financial help and social position had already acquired through her family connections. Her middle-adolescent residential unit had many similar characteristics to the residential unit described in Stack's (1988) study. I found that the contacts, support and cooperation with financial and domestic activities was still nearly as strong after she and her siblings moved to their own flats. This closeness did not notably change during her several previous relationships - until Diana moved in with Jane and Jane's son. I found that a partial (but only partial) transfer of her allegiance and focus to their residential unit then occurred.

Diana's previous Hardman residential unit and family network are still a large part of her present daily allegiances. Her family and social networks of supportive, emotional and financially active participation seem highly focused on the informal market and, in particular, her mother Mia. These allegiances, actions, activities, cooperation, support and participation occur daily and are activities in which her present partner plays only a very minor part<sup>170</sup>. It therefore seems that Diana's inclusion in her closely-knit childhood residential unit has not ceased but has instead developed into a strong, solid and closely-knit family network. I note that this is a very rare structure in the Hardtown and is most often connected with the development of a Hardman family<sup>171</sup>.

In direct contrast to Diana's extensive and close-knit family network, Jane's complete separation and exclusion from her childhood residential unit has resulted in only very limited family network access for her. She has not had any contact with her childhood residential unit, family and their social networks for the last 10-15 years. Previously Jane had some infrequent

<sup>169</sup> Since her father left the family home, Diana has had no contact with him and is unwilling to have any as she feels that this would betray her mother, family network and everything that she believes in.

<sup>170</sup> For instance, Diana talks to her mother every day and visits her several times a week; she also talks and meets up with her siblings frequently. Diana also baby sits, receives goods from them, sell goods they have acquired, defends them (with physical violence if need be) and is consciously aware that their residential unit, tied to their mother, still partially supports her in financial, emotional and family matters. This gives the appearance of a family network built and dependent on the closeness constructed by growing up within the same residential unit.

<sup>171</sup> In the Hardtown community, I came across many households with no strong family networks and some of my informants did not even have a passing acquaintance with blood relatives. However, the success of a Hardman seems to depend on the support he receives from a strong family and social network. It was therefore valuable to observe Diana's Hardman family holding strong and extensive roots, which have developed over an extensive period of time within the community (see also Chapters 5 and 6).



contact with one of her sisters who at the time still resided within the Hardtown community. However, after her sister moved away from the Hardtown and joined the rest of the family, Jane has had no further contact with this sister, the rest of her family or its networks<sup>172</sup>.

The only family network with which Jane is in direct or indirect contact with on an everyday basis is Diana's – and only indirectly through money and goods given to Diana. So saying, I would like to emphasise that Jane does not actually regard herself or her son as part of Diana's family network and does not even feel that it has any connection to their residential unit. For that reason or despite it, she has no qualms about using and abusing the financial, emotive, hierarchical and material gains and connections supplied by Diana's family network.

### Social networks

Diana and Jane's social networks differ greatly in extent, class-diversity and volume. Jane has a very limited social network based only on her connections in the drug circuit and the informal market, the friends or acquaintances she has made and met at the community centre and individuals belonging to Diana's social network. She has problems relating to and cooperating with other individuals and holds dichotomous and problematic opinions of other individuals. At the same time, she is desperate to be liked and to gain friendship but, because of her difficult emotional upbringing, does not trust anyone and often easily turns against any supposed friend or acquaintance. As a result, her personal status in the community hierarchy is very low and she has a very limited access to opportunities to make new friends and social networks. This lack of family and social networks has left Jane in a very isolated and difficult position within the community. This means that she has no financial, emotional or any other form of interaction or support that is not connected to Diana.

At the opposite end of the scale, Diana has very extensive and close-knit family and social networks. From an earlier period of employment, Diana has also managed to build up her own social networks, both inside and outside the work place. Because of these factors, Diana's social networks offer a wide variety of class, socio-economic denomination and standing. Diana has many social connections, which are quite separate from those she has made during her relationship with Jane. This further underlines and emphasises Jane's own lack of social connections and the personal isolation she feels, resulting in a very jealous and vindictive attitude. Consequently this has led to the situation where Diana can only contact, meet and communicate with her own social networks secretly outside their residential unit.

When I asked, Diana named those she considered her most intimate friends, of most importance in her social networks and with whom she had the most frequent daily contact with as: her mother, her siblings, her last two girlfriends before Jane, Carol and Erica<sup>173</sup> and myself. She later added the names Riana and Hanna<sup>174</sup>, two of her cousins and their partners, and her Uncle Peter. I found that, of the ten to fifteen individuals who usually sat around her table every day at the GRcc, there were from five to seven of her most intimate, supportive and trusted friends. Diana was also close to and had diverse relationships with the rest of the frequenters of the GRcc and the members in the one-parent group there.

<sup>172</sup> Apart from one visit from this sister, which lasted about 10 minutes. Furthermore the sister only came because she wanted to get some toys from Jane and to contact a previous friend of her mother's. Jane has met her half-sister from her father's new family twice but decided after this that she would not do so again, since she felt that they wanted something from her that she could not actually give.

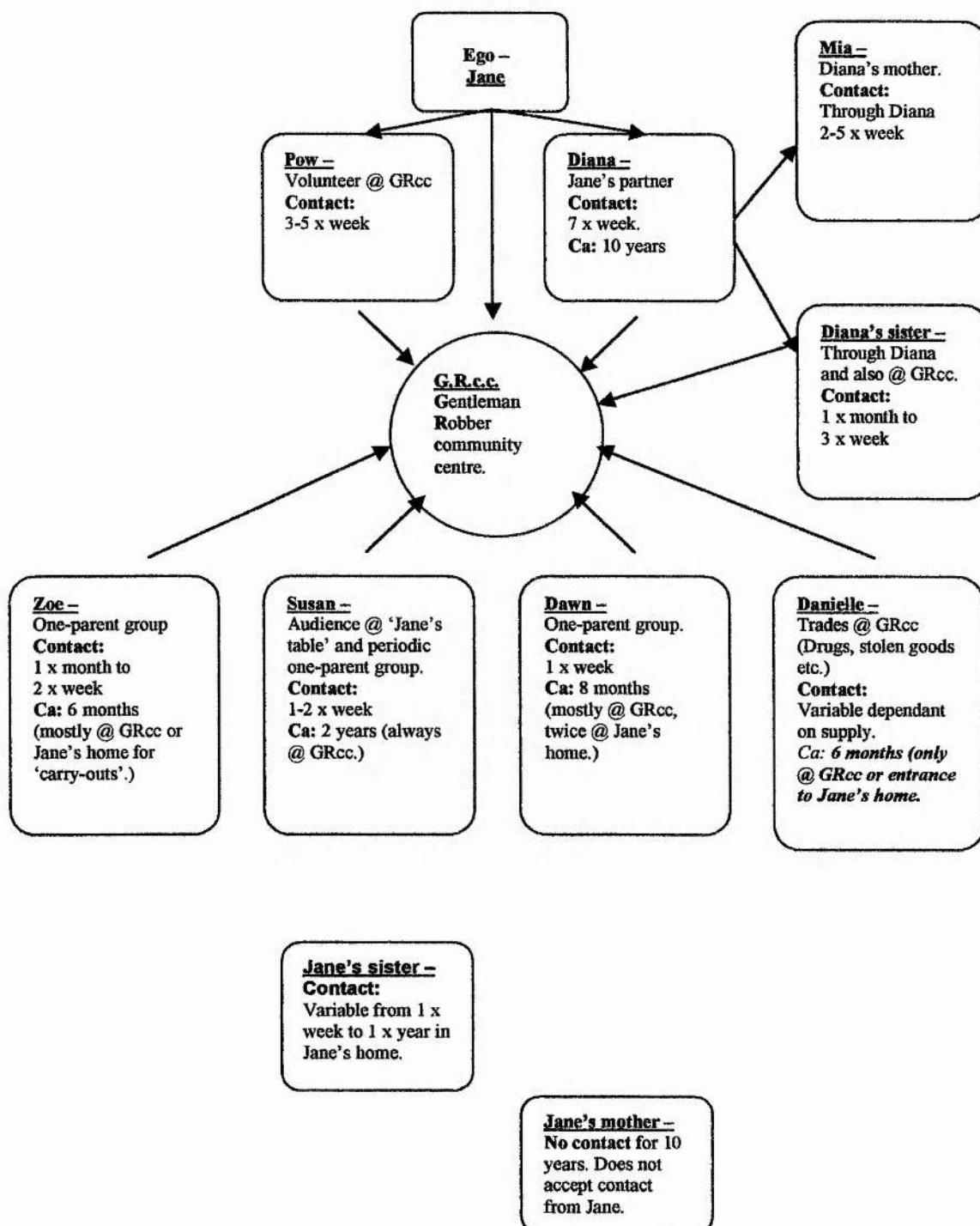
<sup>173</sup> Carol and Erica were two middle-class girls with whom Diana lived before her relationship with Jane.

<sup>174</sup> Riana and Hanna were friends from her previous workplace.

### Network map for Jane

I use a network map based on Jane's networks to further clarify and emphasise the various types of contact she has when trading or taking part in the verbal dichotomised violence of her daily life. This includes the different categories of people she meets and indicates the relative importance of her individual links:

1. What she hopes to ask of them and how often.
2. What they hope to ask of her and how often



As the above network map indicates, Jane does not have many close and important personal links: her two closest and most important links are her partner, Diana and myself.

Diana is Jane's main reciprocal link to trading, support and gift giving and is thus connected to a highly important (albeit partially removed) link to one of the strongest, widest and most powerful networks within the community – Diana's mother Mia. This contact is usually conducted through Diana and is rarely undertaken on a one-to-one basis between Jane and Mia herself. This relationship with Diana also connects her to Diana's Hardmen brothers, her sisters and their extensive reciprocal networks. However, none of the people in Diana's own networks trust Jane and only ask her very infrequently to exchange anything material or financial on their behalf.

Diana's mother and siblings would on a daily basis or at least several times a week, expect Jane to give them certain gossip or information about 'work' in the informal market and forward messages to Diana. They also expected Jane to hide stolen goods, to trade their stolen goods, if asked, and for her to buy them cups of tea. Jane would in turn expect to receive her cut of illegally appropriated goods, accept monetary gifts (mainly for her son or Diana) and to share in their very extensive network for trading. Her relationship with Diana also means that their shared residential unit has status in the community. They expect each other's support in trading and in 'fights' against other factions or outside threats. Although Jane is personally obliged to take part in all such fights, Diana's family can afford to let others take their place. There is little or no reciprocity in Jane's relationship with Diana's family and it is further removed than any comparable, more symmetrical relationship.

Jane and I met on a daily basis, taking part in the traditional reciprocal behaviour of buying every second pot of tea and sharing local gossip. Jane would daily or at least a few times each week, expect me to listen to her problems, wanting me to be her part-time friend, listener and analyst. She also needed someone to help her with filling in forms from the social services and other such institutions, to borrow a pound or two from and stand by her in a fight – that is someone other than her partner. In return, I was given her friendship and was offered use of her local knowledge, gossip and personal stories. After I was accepted as one of the regulars at the table, she often offered to lend me small sums of money and almost every day I was given or rather offered expensive stolen items for free. Jane also often offered me drugs and expressly offered me her and Diana's (and Diana's network's) help and support in fights – and much more.

Jane also had less important connections with Susan, Zoe, Dawn and Danielle, with whom she had comparatively loose trading and gossip relationships. These relationships seemed to be constructed in a more symmetrical shape and with the expectation of a more immediate reciprocity. Those named were members in a group of individuals who would mainly converge on the community centre when they wanted or needed to gossip, tell tales and trade in whatever goods had been ordered or borrowed.

Purchasing each other tea, lending minor sums of cash and other such small things indicated the daily, almost widespread demonstration of reciprocity. In most cases, Diana was clearly the focus of these continual exchanges and reciprocity. The only one with whom Jane had a reasonably close social relationship was Zoe. This was partly because Zoe was Diana's cousin (and so shared the same network) but also because they all socialised together outside

the community centre, sharing the occasional *carry out* at Jane and Diana's house, sometimes as often as several times a month.

Paradoxically, the least important network for Jane's financial everyday existence is her own family, which might otherwise have functioned (as in Diana's case) as Jane's closest talking and trading network. I found instead that, because of her expulsion from the family, she was totally cut off from them and could not depend on her family or their networks for status and support.

### **Hardtown notions of unity**

The visual imagery presented in the above network mapping briefly exemplifies the main types of single parent residential units found within my Hardtown sample. It suggests that the residential units found within the GRcc and within the one-parent group in my Hardtown community sample were never constructed in one distinct and singular form and nor did they have one simple set of characteristics. In particular, my informants objected to the generalised picture of themselves as all coming from limited and fragmented residential units and family networks. This contradicts the supposed unilateral imagery of the socio-economically stigmatised, urban groups such as single parents, which I find are portrayed so negatively by British politicians and media – a topic that was frequently spoken about in anger by my informants.

In paraphrasing my informants they feel that this is state-induced marginal-family rhetoric, which overarchingly suggests the existence of only one simple, morally negative, single parent family-structure. It also separates the marginal household from the rest of the inclusive positive mainstream state imagery of supposedly normative domestic structures and family networks. It propagates a stereotypical image that in its dissemination attempts to negate and eviscerate all local notions and representations of identity, home and residential units, by transforming and depicting them as a negative embodiment.

I emphasise that the Hardtowners consider that their own notions and representations of the home and house as an autonomous unit are contextually as important as any notions of kinfolk relationships and communal affiliation.

Contextually, I also found that they have superficial notions and representations of communal relatedness in the form of a deceptive reference of a communal unity ascribed in the Hardtown by my informants in conversations as; *us living up the town*'. This was used as a means of discerning who does or does not belong within their geographical space<sup>175</sup>. I found this was a spontaneously and infrequently erupting notion of communal unity contextually interconnected to an exclusivity of the marginal<sup>176</sup>. This results in and is the result of a dual<sup>177</sup> dichotomised power play and a life of exclusion.

<sup>175</sup> My informants often used the phrase 'up the town' in conversation as a way of making reference to individuals known to them or viewed as belonging within the Hardtown community.

<sup>176</sup> I found contextually that a notion of relatedness interconnected to a notion of 'otherness' existed within the Hardtown. This results in a representation and notion of exclusivity of the marginal individual, group and community as the outsider in mainstream society. This creates a notion and representation of relatedness connected to exclusion.

<sup>177</sup> My informants frequently referred to a dual internal and external conflict and opposition.



At the same time, I found that a certain notion of fluidity existed in this expression. This was due to its notion of temporality and was viewed and defined as holding shifting parameters, dependent on context and on the personal opinions of the individuals using it. However, I also found that the use of the phrase seemed to assume, often incorrectly, that a certain amount of dependability and trust existed on a stable basis between the members belonging within this communal unity.

The Hardtown notion of communal unity and relatedness<sup>178</sup> seemed to suggest the existence of an open local boundary with a varied degree of fluidity. I found that this was in an almost permanent state of flux between loose and fixed formations. Its ever-changing structure had both permanent and unstable connections to notions of home and community space. These notions transgress between states of permanence and fluidity, which I found existed ambiguously in a complex dialogue. It seemed that this dialogue was necessary to transgress the limits of the fluid boundary through existing simultaneously and apart in a paradoxical state of separation and relatedness in the notions of home and the communal unity as encountered in this stressful locality.

These notions of unity were used by many within my sample group as a means of gaining advantages within the community. For example, many of my informants expressed reluctance about trading and exchanging stolen goods or information with anyone they knew did not belong within their communal unity - even if this was a highly temporary and fluid denomination.

Paradoxically, the Hardtown notion of a communal feeling of marginal togetherness is also conditional and is mainly exercised against outsiders and government agencies<sup>179</sup>.

My informants expressed daily that a personal and collective importance was placed locally on the construction of a widespread family and social network, particularly within the communal informal market economy. This is exemplified and visualised by the high status and importance contextually ascribed to Hardman families such as Diana's.

Many Hardtowners expressed the view that participation in this complex contextual interrelationship was a way of taking part in local act of defiance against forces, institutions, and actors outside the community. The Hardtown individual struck a blow for himself/herself against these outside pressure by stealing, committing benefit fraud and putting money in his/her own pocket. The informal market had an important if not vital part to play in the Hardtowners' everyday life and survival as it was considered as a means of defiance, economic gain and personal as well as communal empowerment. It was also regarded as a force to maintain and build family and social networks and breach household boundaries and was seen as a financial necessity for daily survival. This made it a strong player within the community's power dichotomy.

The daily stress of the constant socio-economic pressures from external agencies as well as the internal power struggle within the informal market seemed to endorse suspicion and fragmentation within the community on all levels. It also created the need for such overarching

<sup>178</sup> This relatedness seems to reach or extend to a structure of locality.

<sup>179</sup> The widespread notion of a shared marginality is regularly displayed within the communal continuous power dichotomy against external forces and agencies such as: doctors, social service staff, police and community centre staff.

notions and expressions of unity as the one that is linked to the power of the strong Hardman and his networks. Such networks require force as well as charisma to partly breach or overcome problems of temporality found in most Hardtown exchange networks and help change it into something of high communal status and importance. This further explains the local emphasis on strong and close-knit financial and social cooperation and support from an individual's residential unit, family and social networks. More specifically, I found that the informal market and Hardtown networks made it easier for the community and its individuals to exist economically on a day-to-day basis.

Bearing this in mind, I conclude that socio-economic marginality and poverty do not automatically destroy or weaken family and social networks in the Hardtown. To summarise, I find the socio-economic need for such networks to exist in the Hardtown for the continued survival of marginal individuals. I feel that this is further supported by the positive communal hierarchical status linked to networks in the Hardtown. I suggest that the notion of local status this gives partly explains the continued existence of such exchange and support networks (cf. C. Stack 1974 and 1988).

### **Hardtown residential unit boundaries**

For most individuals within the Hardtown community the notion of a residential unit had several meanings:

1. It is viewed as a place providing emotional, hierarchical and financial nurture and support. This domicile may represent a number of different types of residential units, comprising either kin (e.g. a mother and her dependent children) or non-kin (e.g. an individual and his/her girl or boyfriend) sharing the living space and food as well as cooperating in domestic activities.
2. It is also considered within a community rife with suspicion and fear, which lead to this fragmented infrastructure, as the smallest and most secure location that gives temporary security and protection against outside intervention by either kin or non-kin denominations. Nevertheless, I find that mistrust and suspicion permeate all levels of the community - including the residential unit itself.
3. Paradoxically, some of my informants consider that the residential unit is also the last bastion of either positive or negative notions of mainstream normality and morality (cf. Day, 1999).
4. It is also considered to play a part in defining both individual as well as family-based, hierarchical positioning within the community.
5. Many of my informants connect the development and social recognition of residential units in the Hardtown community with the presence of one or several dependent children.
6. In Stack's (1988) study of households within a poor black urban community, the boundaries between domiciles were relatively fluid. By comparison, the Hardtown individual residential units seem to have slightly more rigid structures and boundaries for those who live in them and share in domestic nurture and support.
7. Most of my informants consider that the content, formation and characterisation of the Hardtown residential unit comprise a family sharing a home.

The term 'family' as used in the Hardtown context should not be viewed through the one-dimensional characterisation of the British State's normative political discourse, which

defines this group as a nuclear family. Neither should it be viewed as a fundamentally insular group with no interrelated or interconnected relationship and cooperation from other internal or external groups or institutions. I discovered that connections and cooperation were important, even within this poor community, so fraught and fragmented by daily fear and suspicion and the in the throes of power dichotomy. The conclusions I draw from my Hardtown work is that we cannot assume that all spheres and institutions<sup>180</sup> are and should be viewed and categorised as separate institutions.

Even in the generally negative visualisation of anthropological kinship methods lent by Schneider (1989:196) I found that he recommends that we should not, as a method of organisation and control, 'assume that kinship, economics, politics, and religion are distinct entities'. So doing, I feel that we only limit our own experience and knowledge of other people's daily experiences, interactions and boundaries.

The structures and characteristics given in the three life histories' respective network examples described above represent the most common and established patterns I encountered within this part of the Hardtown community.

As expressed by my informants in the three examples above, I find that the central focus and similarity in the development or construction of the Hardtown residential unit are the existence of one or several dependent children<sup>181</sup>. My observations within the community indicate that neither the age nor the marital status of the parent have any contextual function as the deciding, contributing factor or characteristics in the creation of a residential unit. Many of my informants consider that local Hardtown notions of home and house are of key social importance as the presence (or lack) of a child or partner can and do change a person's personal status as well as his/her access to trading and support networks. I find the presence of a child or children is generally considered as a notion of relative permanence that also seems to embody a high degree of social importance and value.

The social emphasis and the elevated status linked to the presence of children within the residential unit may be suggested to locally create and to constitute on a day-to-day basis the primarily most valued and socially recognisable institution. Paradoxically, this status is also feared. Many of my informants feel that marital status can be and is used as a criterion by which external institutions judge them. This is even seen by some as yet another means used by external forces to subjugate them. In particular, because of their unmarried status, many of my single parent informants had frequently been questioned about their sexual practices when they collected their benefits. They expressed a feeling that they were the moral scapegoats for the social service staff.

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<sup>180</sup> These spheres and institutions include: politics, economics, hierarchy, religion and domestic activities, such as nurturing and support.

<sup>181</sup> Within the Hardtown community, I view the presence of a dependent child within a residential unit as the most widespread determining factor for the status of that unit.

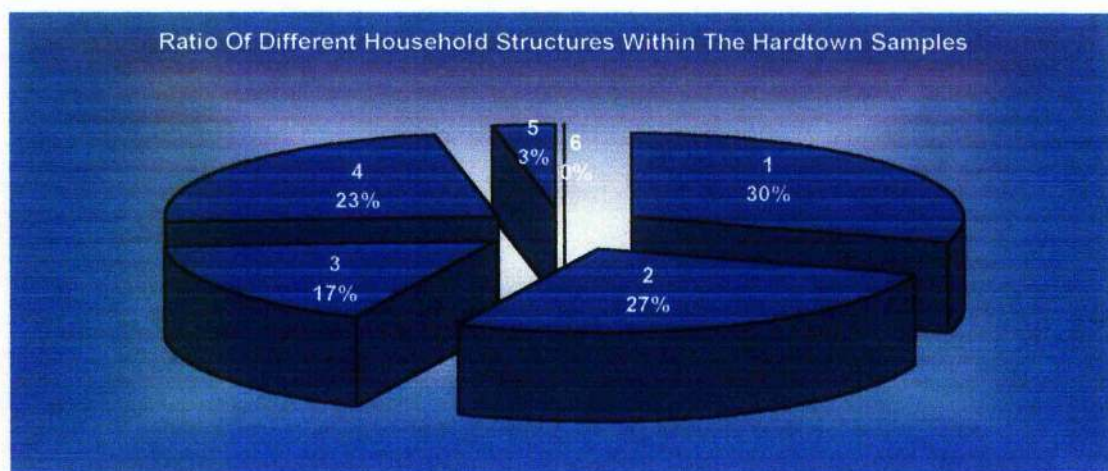


### Composition of residential units in Hardtown

To further examine the structure of the research samples, I return to the composition of the residential unit in Hardtown and the question: who typically resides there?

From the 20-30 households with which I had most contact, six different structures of cohabitation were determined:

1. A single parent of either gender living alone with one or several dependent children, having no contact with the biological father or mother of the child or children.
2. A single parent of either gender living alone with one or several dependent children, having different levels of contact with the non-cohabiting biological father or mother of the child or children.
3. A single parent of either gender, with one or several dependent children, cohabiting temporarily and unofficially<sup>182</sup> with a partner (boyfriend or girlfriend).
4. A single parent of either gender, with one or several dependent children, cohabiting permanently<sup>183</sup> and unofficially with a partner.
5. Two married parents cohabiting permanently with one or several dependent children.
6. A single parent of either gender, with one or several dependent children, cohabiting officially with a permanent partner.



From this sample of 20-30 households, it is clear that the four single parent structures (1-4) are the most common, everyday forms of cohabitation within the Hardtown. Structures such as the married couple with dependent children (5) and the single parent with dependent children and an official permanent partner (6) are the non-normative form of cohabitation in this Hardtown sample.

Within this Hardtown sample of 20-30 households, I found several examples where a sister or a mother has accepted children belonging to their siblings or children into their own residential unit. Unlike the households described by Stacks (1988), children in the Hardtown

<sup>182</sup> Unofficially means that the cohabitation is not recorded or reported to the social services or council.

<sup>183</sup> A permanent relationship for the Hardtowners' means a consecutive period of more than 12 months.



cases do not often move between two or more households - if at all<sup>184</sup>. By comparison, I found instead that the Hardtown examples clearly show that residential unit boundaries take on a far more rigid autonomous and cemented form.

In most cases within my Hardtown sample, I found that any temporary breach of the boundaries of the residential unit most usually stopped when the children were incorporated into the new household<sup>185</sup>. The children usually did not again leave the new family for any length of time, either to return to their biological parents or to any other residential unit.

In the Hardtown sample, the boundaries between the different residential units are normally contextualised as rigid and independent units. Many Hardtowners<sup>186</sup> expressed the opinion that, even while they were connected through many networks to family and social spheres, they still consider the home and house as separate and independent. On this basis, I therefore propose that the main difference between Stack's (1988) study of a marginal-poor black urban household and my own study lies precisely in the functions that she determined as most descriptive for her community: the open fluidity<sup>187</sup> of the residential units and family networks.

### **Trading and exchanges**

The Hardtowners' trading networks involve transient and fragmented contacts and exchanges of information, support<sup>188</sup> and informal market goods between individuals and their networks. In the Hardtown the existence of a trading network (even if it is unstable and short term) seems to be dependent on a notion of financial necessity, together with the desire to advance hierarchically within the community. The need for access to goods, money and status for the socio-economically marginal Hardtown individual promotes the continued existence, use and development of the local exchange networks, interconnected with family and social networks, in the face of their dangers and fears. For example in some of the Hardtown's more close-knit family networks (e.g. Diana's) I found a network of everyday financial exchange<sup>189</sup>. However, this does not have the same daily frequency and extent as described by C Stack's (1988) example of the urban poor black households.

I found that the main difference between these two illustrated trading networks was the relative openness of both the household boundaries and the timescales involved with C. Stack's example, where the trading was not directly linked to reimbursement or recompense. By contrast, most of my Hardtown informants seemed to consider that immediate settlement of a

<sup>184</sup> Contrary to the example given by C Stack (1988), I do not count baby-sitting as such a breach of domestic boundaries. This is due to the short time-span that the child spends within different locations and also because contextually these children within the Hardtown sample would neither feel, be viewed or counted as permanent parts of the residential unit in which the baby-sitting took place.

<sup>185</sup> I found that the incorporation or adoption of children belonging to either siblings or children of the adoptive residential units did not, as in C Stack's (1988) example, visibly breach or change the boundaries of the residential unit on other than an entirely temporarily basis.

<sup>186</sup> Expressed in the network descriptions (Chapter 3) and by many others in the Hardtown sample.

<sup>187</sup> This fluidity seems to propose or assume a certain amount of constancy, dependability and trust in the exchanges, which I never found in comparable encounters within our Hardtown examples.

<sup>188</sup> Support in this context means the exchange of small sums of money, second hand clothing and furniture as well as infrequent help with childcare.

<sup>189</sup> Interconnected with the Hardtown informal market.

debt or compensation was a normative necessity<sup>190</sup>. This is due to contextual pressures of suspicion and high risk, associated with the informal market, and a lack of financial latitude. In addition, I suggest that the development of such a short repayment and trading cycle partly depended on the brief and rapidly changing nature of friendships and sexual liaisons among young (childless) Hardtown men and women. However, I found that the acceptable, time frame lapses between Hardtown exchanges and their compensation were mostly longer within close-knit family networks than within the social networks<sup>191</sup>.

I found that in local exchanges, negotiations and even in fights, it was essential that all of the members of a Hardman family, not just the Hardman himself, were highly skilled. Indeed, it is improbable that a locally prestigious and powerful kinship group like a Hardman family would be accepted without the highly capable support of all of the women and men in that particular network. Moreover, I found that the women held a strong position within the local Hardman networks. Their high status and contacts in the informal market of small illegally acquired goods were often considered the foundation that held these kinship groups together.

### **Trust and kinship**

The examples above suggest that kinship and notions of relatedness in the Hardtown are mostly concerned with filiation – the links between parents and children. Throughout my fieldwork, the importance of this bond was expressed on a daily basis. While this was mostly concerned with moral behaviour and more material benefits, the link was also made with the concept of trust – or absence of trust:

1. My informants in the Hardtown generally consider it unwise to completely trust anyone in any form of relationship. However, most of my informants feel that the bond between parent and child allows for more trust than in any other relationship.
2. My informants say that this is linked to the Hardtown notion of being a good parent, which is considered to be important within notions and representations of morality.
3. Many Hardtowners consider that Parenthood somehow makes an individual more secure in his/her role in the community and, hence, more reliable.
4. Pregnancy and parenthood increase status, transforming a child contextually into an adult. This situation is often followed by personal material gain as gifts are received from parents and the family and social networks.
5. Parenthood also 'opens the door' to an adult's flat and benefits
6. This situation may (at least temporarily) tie an individual closer to these networks<sup>192</sup> by a feeling of moral obligation.
7. Gifts and favours given at such times may allow the individuals concerned further access to trading and exchange networks on a basis of reciprocal but conditional trust.

<sup>190</sup> All transactions involving exchanges or trading reimbursements are expected to be immediate, particularly where the Hardtown family network is weak compared with some of the social networks such as Hardtown youth groups or gangs. As my informants' behaviour suggests, the only exceptions involve exchanges between long-time best friends or soul mates.

<sup>191</sup> The expected time frame for the compensation or reimbursement of favours such as the loan of clothes or childminding was longer and could extend for months. However, the loan of small sums of money or drugs is always understood to be a short-term arrangement – repayment is expected within a few days at the most.

<sup>192</sup> When a Hardtown woman becomes pregnant and has her baby, she is transformed from the autonomous and unstable individual affiliations and memberships of youth gangs to the adult world of residential units and family and social networks.

Horizontal links and deeper generational links may seem on the surface to be of less importance within the Hardtown community. However, the descriptions of the connections of Hamish, Diana and Jane demonstrate that it is not that these links are unimportant but they are often not trusted, due to mutual suspicion and paranoia. The key here is trust, which is viewed as a transient concept by Hardtowners. Trust is not specifically looked for but instead thought of as an intrinsic and bartered part of exchanges, cooperation and relationships. Hardtowners neither look for nor show absolute trust or even permanent trust in anyone, as this would, in Hardtown terms, make them foolish. However, Hardtowners still expect other Hardtowners to have a degree of dependability, albeit only on a temporary basis. As a case in point, many of the GRcc's frequenters consider Jane is less reliable than Diana, as Jane has not fulfilled her obligations in many trades. Trust depends on individual behaviour, skill and connections and is always negotiable.

Nevertheless, I find that all Hardtowners face the necessary daily dilemma of deciding whom they can trust, even if only on a temporary basis, during trading and cooperation. This predicament occurs because of what I propose is a local culture of mutual suspicion.

A general feeling expressed by most of my informants is of continuous stress, focused on always being aware that anyone can and will inform on them or perhaps invade their space. This anxiety is palpable with many and originates from their dichotomised fragmentation and unstable relations with internal and external forces. In particular, I find it to be linked to the Hardtown informal market and its ambiguous and unstable morality, where everyone and everything is considered to be negotiable. This culture of suspicion makes it difficult for many Hardtowners to put any trust at all in even their own partner - as in the case of Diana and Jane.

Despite this inherent suspicion, I found that traders used these horizontal and deeper generational links. I assume that this is because only concentrating on a strong and extensive residential unit would otherwise cut off essential routes of access to important sources of income, support, cooperation and information through these networks.

The extensive time spent by most Hardtowners on daily gossip (or bragging as some may call it) underlines the importance of kinship in their talking-relationships and trade. This is locally considered as a way of showing pride and support for your kin. I found that, by the creation of these talking-relationships, the Hardtowners further extend their networks while at the same time they construct and maintain in detail their own individual and network status. This status is linked to individual access to material, moral and emotional support, trading and particularly to the skill demonstrated in the performance of violence<sup>193</sup> (cf. Chapter 6).

### **Geographical spread of Hardtown relatives**

Having considered the Hardtown contextual cohabitation formations, I now look at the everyday geographical spread commonly found between a residential unit and their relatives. This is not a specific investigation or mapping of a complete family network but only a brief perusal of the family network sphere, investigating: How far apart do Hardtown individuals live from their other relatives?

<sup>193</sup> I add that, in many cases within the Hardtown, the women's networks are, or seem to be, more extensive than the men's. This is probably related to the high number of women taking part in and regulating the exchanges of the small, illegally acquired goods within the local informal market.



It should be noted that the Hardtown was for a long time used for drug rehabilitation programs and also served as the last placement area for ex-prisoners and other such difficult individuals and households within the council housing circuit<sup>194</sup>. This involuntary relocation of households, mainly by the social Services, may partly explain and clarify the extent of the geographical spread found between the main part of the 20-30 strong Hardtown residential unit sample and for most of their relatives.

Most of the informants in my Hardtown sample indicate<sup>195</sup> that the geographical spread between a residential unit and each of their relatives is often extensive. Many from the sample residential units commonly say that their relatives are distributed widely either within their own community, in an adjoining community or in neighbouring towns and cities. One likely explanation is that, while the local council theoretically offers an individual the choice when he/she applies for a new flat, there are seldom enough accessible flats available at any one time to give him/her many options. However, many of my informants suggest that, in their experience, the social services actively try to prevent any new residential unit from receiving a flat close to any of their closest relatives. Despite this widely held belief, I find that they usually accepted one of the first choices given by the council. This acquiescence is probably for one or more of the following reasons: overcrowding, poverty, lack of information about their rights and the lack of strength to fight for another placement.

In a few cases, I find a much higher level of repositioning of local, spatial, relational and domestic tenacity and proximity with specific residential units from particularly solid and close family networks. This is certainly the case with Hardman families that have long term and strong family network foundations.

This is yet another example of the social importance ascribed contextually to the strong, close and extensive family and social networks: a view expressed and embodied in most of my informants' everyday gossip and trading. After sitting through countless histories from my informants, I find that this repetition lends and tries to depict a near-idolised image of the Hardman family: an institution that many within the community stressed has existed within the Hardtown for a long period of time. I also find that this image helps Hardtowners to articulate a positive empowerment against the external, mainstream stereotyping of the marginal household. In particular, they see the Hardman family as an ideal that breaks down mainstream values and notions. This is essentially a paradox in which the mainstream notion of immorality is transformed to morality: this is usually conceptualised contextually by referring to the high status and power held by the Hardman families and their positions within the informal market.

In the Hardtown, I find that the Hardman families often have the strongest networks, the longest time-span of residence and the closest geographical positioning in the sampled households and their relations. This is perhaps best illustrated by Diana's family network<sup>196</sup>.

<sup>194</sup> This image of the past was assembled by information and stories received from Hardtowners and social service staff.

<sup>195</sup> Many of Diana's relatives live in the Hardtown or in communities bordering Hardtown, but her mother still lives in the childhood home in Hardtown: Hamish's relatives live in Broughty Ferry: Jane's estranged relatives live in Montrose.

<sup>196</sup> Diana is a member of a Hardman family and has strong links to power and status through her two Hardman brothers. Many in the community consider her family as strong and close, and many of her relatives live in the same community. Her cousin and uncle live in the high-rise building immediately next to the one where she and Jane have their flat. Diana's network communicates, supports and works together on a regular, near-daily basis and is linked closely to (and rules part of) the informal market in the Hardtown. It is important to note that not all



### Leaving the childhood home

Before I begin, it is first necessary to present, view and investigate the local Hardtown definition of adulthood. In this way, I am able to discover when and under what circumstances a child leaves his/her childhood residential unit and becomes an adult. During my original fieldwork in different Dundee communities, I found that most of my informants used age as a common factor in defining when an individual left the childhood home. This was less clear in my initial discussions with informants from Hardtown and I found it necessary to monitor the specific criteria, transgressions and transformations in a Hardtown contextual adult boundary construction.

During daily conversations in the community centre Hardtowners expressed various opinions about when individuals are treated and become contextually regarded as adults, who are then expected to leave their childhood residential unit. In most cases, this depended on an individual, either on his/her own or with a partner, being offered council accommodation, a house or more usually a flat, for one or more of the reasons mentioned below:

1. Age.
2. Overcrowding in the childhood home.
3. Pregnancy (see later).
4. New employment.
5. Behavioural problems in the childhood home: e.g. violence or unreasonableness.
6. Further education.
7. Marriage.
8. Moving in with a boyfriend or girlfriend.
9. Forcible removal from the childhood home by the authorities: e.g. jail or juvenile detention; children's home or foster care.
10. Exclusion on a more or less permanent basis from the residential unit and family network: e.g. drug or alcohol abuse.
11. Self-exclusion from the household or family network: e.g. status or, more simply, the individuals in the residential unit do not get on.

As this list shows, I find that reaching an adult 'age' is not the sole (or even the most widespread or common) reason why or when an individual left his/her childhood residential unit. This is exemplified by the descriptions given by Hamish, Jane and Diana for leaving their childhood homes (see Chapter 3). Although employment (4), further education (6) and marriage (7) were given and are listed as possible reasons for leaving the childhood home, I find that Hardtowners consider all of them uncommon and unlikely to be the sole reason for someone leaving the childhood residential unit. Instead, my Hardtown informants suggest that the most frequent, common and day-to-day reasons for departure were, in no particular order:

- Overcrowding.
- Lack of parental control.
- Placement in a juvenile detention centre or into foster care.
- Violence and crime often linked to moving in with others in youth gangs.

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kin of a Hardman are automatically considered part of his family network. It is possible for even close kin to lose or be denied the right to such a status if they are thought not to 'pull their weight' through weakness, stupidity or repeated failure to bring in assets. Such relatives are considered to have left the family.

- Pregnancy.
- Exclusion from household instigated either by the parent or child or moving in with a partner (boyfriend or girlfriend), partially illustrated by Hamish, Diana and Jane's examples (see Chapter 3).

I find that leaving a Hardtown childhood residential unit is most often linked to the establishment of new residential units – and often involves boyfriends or girlfriends.

### **Boyfriends and Girlfriends, temporary guests or permanent support?**

In earlier sections, I presented and investigated several areas of Hardtown's notions of relatedness and locality. I continue this theme by taking a closer look at the contextual role of the boyfriend or girlfriend within the Hardtown sample of the official single parent residential units.

In agreement with C Stacks' (1974:50) study, I find as a general rule within my own Hardtown single parent household sample that in many cases 'the fact of birth does not provide a child with a chain of socially recognized relatives through his father'<sup>197</sup>. This effectively cuts the mother and child off from receiving any of the necessary support from the father or his family and social networks when they set up a new home.

While the community may recognise a man as the child's biological father, the more important local socially recognised relatedness and paternity is closely linked to the existence and participation in a daily, public, personal and family-based sponsorship of the child. This includes all financial, social and emotional support.

I find that the local social context determines the paternity of the newborn baby (and any child) by considering the man with whom the mother is sexually involved, cohabits and supports the mother and child on a day-to-day basis. This is irrespective of whether this man is the biological father of the child or not. The Hardtown notion of fatherhood bears with it many responsibilities but the most important of these is the daily presence of the man acting as a locally defined father within the residential unit.

When a woman becomes pregnant within the Hardtown I find that she gives this news first to her family and friends. For example, as many as 8 out of 10 of my informants said that they first told their friends and family of their pregnancy, naming the child's biological father. In each of these cases, they did this even before they informed the biological father himself of the pregnancy. This sequence of information is more common if the relationship resulting in the pregnancy was only a temporary liaison and merely based on sex.

My experience within the Hardtown suggests that the name of the biological father is seldom reported to the social services or registered in any official documents, at least not at this early stage. The reasons given for not officially registering the name of the biological father of a child at this time include:

1. Suspicion of him and his family and what they may do with the knowledge.

<sup>197</sup> There are occasions when the biological mother does not want to take care of a child and has had the custody of the child removed, due to circumstances such as unsuitability of care giver. In these cases, the father has usually assumed the custody of the child. When neither of the biological parents is willing to accept the custody of the child the state will step in.

2. Suspicion of the social services and of their interference.
3. Notions of privacy – *'Eh dinna ha to tell nea one wha is just meh business'*. This is particularly true if the relationship was only temporary.

Many women are worried that, if they tell the social services the name of the father, they may force them to inform the father: something they feel is solely their choice.

In the Hardtown, when a man was named as the biological father of a child he was locally considered to have several options open to him. I found that the most usual reactions discussed among my sample and at the community centre table were:

1. He admits or denies paternity - officially and/or unofficially.
2. He accuses the mother of having several lovers to deny paternity or blacken her name.
3. He takes an active part in the child's life but not in the mother's life.
4. He includes the child into his kinship affiliations and supports him/her.
5. He refuses to take an active part in the child's life and withholds any support.
6. He moves in with the mother and child and becomes a permanent part of their lives: very unusual in these cases.
7. He shares custody of the child with the mother (cf. Hamish's case in Chapter 3).

The extent of support that a child and his/her residential unit can expect to receive from the biological father and his networks varies but, depending on its extent and regularity, may contextually and socially validate his paternity as well as his right to have access to the child.

The life histories, tales and gossip exchanged among my informants around Diana's table suggest that it is a contextually widespread behaviour for Hardtown men and women (particularly those without children) to have a rapid succession of different friends and sexual partners. In most cases, these are linked through a series of social encounters such as hanging around at street corners, meeting within the youth gangs, informal market trading, drinking and dancing and school. My informants express the opinion that most of these encounters do not result in any lasting connections.

Consider for example Darla and her group of *'stomper'* friends, who spent weekends taking drugs and having sexual encounters with men they met at clubs or raves. For some of the women in her group of friends, this resulted in unwanted pregnancies to men they only considered as one-night-stands. More often than not, such encounters were highly forgettable and are usually dismissed with laughing sarcasm; *were nea even tha good, ken! So why tha fuck would yea wanna remember tha?*

In the Hardtown sample, I find that socio-economic problems such as unemployment and dependence on the welfare wage affect the relationships of the young, unmarried adults without children and result in many fragile and short-term relationships. Some of the reasons given for the rapid and frequent changes and unstable nature of sexual relationships among Hardtown women and men seem to be interconnected to the great financial and emotive local pressure they face. This view is supported by Carol B Stack's (1974/1988) studies of a poor, urban, black community, where the 'social economic pressures on male-female relationships' were found to be equally great and thus resulted in 'highly unstable' relationships between unmarried and young adults of childbearing age (ibid: 50).

Following discussions with my older informants in Hardtown I find that, while many are in long-term relationships, others maintain a succession of sexual liaisons and even fewer

marry. Marriage is not commonly considered unless the couple have shared a home together for many years and then generally not until the woman has borne several children. I find that, even in these circumstances, marriage is not considered as a contextual certainty. Many of the couples in my sample group have never married; nor are they officially registered as sharing a household as common law partners, even after spending many years in a stable relationship, sharing an abode and raising a family together. It seems that, while the couple may be locally recognised as a residential unit and live together, they are reluctant to make this arrangement legal and thus official. This is due to the socio-economic complexity of what they believe is inadequate welfare support for families in unemployment. My informants often express the view that informing the social services of their true residential status would result in non-affordable financial problems linked to the loss of two benefits cheques after marriage or admittance of cohabitation.

I find that the length and depth of relationships in Hardtown differ no more and no less than they do in mainstream society – as illustrated by the relationship histories of Hamish, Diana and Jane in Chapter 3.

I now consider the impermanent status of Hardtown relationships, in particular how the temporary boyfriend or girlfriend adapts to and is accepted within the residential unit. I find that their status or recognition is highly dependent on the form, shape and length of the sexual relationship. It also depends on the domestic contributions, cooperation and support lent by the boyfriend or girlfriend in every individual case. If the boyfriend or girlfriend takes on a daily sexual, financial, emotive, nurturing and supportive role within the residential unit he/she is contextually counted as a part of the unit. He/she is also regarded and identified contextually with any children born within the household during the relationship, even if they are not biologically his/hers. The local community publicly accepts and legitimises children from such relationships through or by the very existence of the children within the residential unit. In many cases, this local social notion of identification continues to a certain degree even after the relationship has ended<sup>198</sup>.

My informants in Hardtown clearly consider that the temporary partners found in the unstable, teenage relationships are not included or incorporated into the residential unit until they spend a certain time dating, financially supporting and courting their partners. In many cases, these temporary partners do not even meet the children from previous relationships until a long trial period has elapsed.

In several cases from my Hardtown sample, transient partners are not allowed into the residential unit until the child has gone to bed or was sent to stay with relatives (see Darla's case in Chapter 3). A few women and men did not even allow their current partners into their home even on such a limited and regulated basis. This was certainly the case with Hamish (see Chapter 3), who made sure that any dates took place outside his home because he did not want his child to meet or become attached to anyone who might not stay around or be in their lives for long. In these relationships, gifts and small sums of money are sometimes gratefully received - if not expected. In these temporary sexual relationships, courting gifts do not gain the individual any influence or say in the household. For example, Darla would occasionally bring men home for 're-runs' (as she put it), but only if he; *was es good as he said and if he was es generous as he was good, which dinna happen often, ken!*

<sup>198</sup> In addition, the identification of someone with the children of a previous partner continues until the former partner (the mother or father of the children) engages in another stable relationship.



On this basis, I conclude that the behaviour of temporary residents decides how they are viewed and incorporated in a residential unit<sup>199</sup>.

While I did find that most of the younger individuals take part in a succession of short and unstable sexual relationships, many of which often lasted only for a night or at most a few months<sup>200</sup>, I suggest that this does not differ greatly from the behaviour of young individuals from the more mainstream and affluent Dundee communities in which I also spent some time. Instead, I posit that more general notions of sex and relationships among all young individuals have changed and taken many different routs and forms, none of which are exactly applicable to the moral values of the state's stereotypical and perhaps traditional, mainstream notions of morality (cf. the discussion on the issue of the 'bad' single mother in Appendix 4)

As Hardtowners grow older and take on more responsibilities, particularly parenthood, many engage in long-term relationships and partnerships, some as long as ten to fifteen years. It should also be borne in mind that most long-term partnerships are rarely registered officially because of the otherwise unbearable threat to their households of losing welfare benefits. In Hardtown terms, these 'temporary' relationships are little different from officially registered marriages. They hold the same contextual worth in their community and are an exact replica of the financial, emotive, public and domestic support, cooperation and division as any residential unit holding a married couple. Seen in these terms, Hardtown relationships are as moral or immoral as any relationship in normative society.

### **Pregnancy and parenthood a contextual transgression?**

The Hardtown household sample group indicates that one of the main reasons for young unmarried women leaving their childhood residential unit is pregnancy. In contextual value terms, this gives these women a more or less automatic age promotion. It transforms them into the local realm of an adult and avoids the local obstruction of any liminal teenage waiting periods. I also find that pregnancy and parenthood alters and elevates their contextual place within the community hierarchy.

Hardtown notions of parenthood are closely linked to the structure or construction of the residential unit and I go as far as suggesting these notions also embody a contextual and social importance.

In the Hardtown case study I find transitional rites linked to the liminal periods:

1. Finding out about the pregnancy.
2. Giving birth.
3. Moving to a new house or flat.

I note that, in practice, the second and third stages are interchangeable but each is of liminal importance. These three stages socially, contextually and symbolically constitute transitional phases in the Hardtowners' locally and socially ascribed concept of adulthood. Pregnancy thus provides an individual with a short cut to the otherwise age-based series of

<sup>199</sup> The degree of incorporation into and the public perception of any new residential unit depends on the length of the relationship and the contribution and support to the woman and, in particular, her children.

<sup>200</sup> This type of behaviour is common, not only in the three cases I mapped but also in most other cases from my Hardtown sample.

transitional-developmental phases of waiting to become recognised and acknowledged as an adult.

In the case of young girls first becoming pregnant, I find that the initial stages of this ritual can be considered as partial, preliminal periods of separation. These are waiting periods in which the girl is placed or places herself before she transgresses the more common age boundaries of the society or community.

Initially, the pregnant female is still considered and treated within the community as a girl and a child. Depending on her age, her family and friends in the sample group typically showed varied degrees of support and pleasure with regards to her condition. For example, if the girl in question is over 14 years and has been in a relationship for more than two or three months, the response from her family and from friends in her own social network is usually positive. Although it is considered socially unacceptable (and illegal) for a girl of this age to become pregnant, it is not uncommon in Hardtown. Bearing in mind that many in Hardtown (and in the rest of Dundee if my various informants are reliable) started their sexual career as young as 11 or 12, it is in some ways surprising that the socially acceptable age is not lower.

During the early stages of pregnancy, the young Hardtown female's status alters and she reaches another communal level with its own adapted notion of responsibility, values and weight. This has the gradual and slowly evolving effect on the way she is treated and spoken to within the community<sup>201</sup>, mainly within her home but partially within her family and social networks. Particularly within her family, she is in contextual terms no longer a full member of her childhood residential unit but is instead viewed as a possible new branch within the family network. In other words, the expectation is that, unless she continues to live in her childhood residential unit after giving birth, she will form a new branch of the family network.

During the middle stages of pregnancy, she is encouraged to take part in meetings of almost ritual importance for her continued well being as well as for the formation of her new residential unit. She is encouraged to go to the doctor for regular check-ups and to meet up with other pregnant mothers to talk about their mutual situation. At this time, she also attends regular meetings with the social services and may be offered some kind of council housing, if she can convince them that she cannot continue to live in her childhood home.

At this particular stage, I find that almost in a symbolically ritual fashion she receives visits and gifts from most individuals within her childhood residential unit, family and social networks. I find that the timing of this stage differs, depending on when individuals feel the pregnancy is secure and there is little danger of a miscarriage. These visits had a similar form and, in near-ritual proportions, the gift giving became an acknowledgement of her pregnancy and the concomitant acceptance of her child. I find that these rituals helped to transform the expectant mum within the community from a child to an adult.

After listening to the gossip and discussions taking part around Diana's table at the community centre, I find that this kind of gift giving was locally viewed as an important

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<sup>201</sup> Contextually, it appears that internal agencies, such as her family and social network, and external institutions, such as the council and the social services, have already started treating her as an autonomous individual who is, because of her pregnancy, transformed overnight into someone capable of absorbing life-changing information regarding housing, finances and much else.

symbolic ritual<sup>202</sup>. Many express the view that it plays an important part in symbolically incorporating the pregnant woman and her future child into the community and affirms her personal networks. In return, the pregnant woman also symbolically makes the community and her own network part of her pregnancy and the life of her future child.

The process of gift giving takes place in several stages. In the first stage, those in her family and social networks visit her childhood residential unit to hand over gifts either to help her through her pregnancy or for the unborn child. During the second stage, they return to her childhood residential unit before she leaves for her new flat, offering small gifts and wishing her good luck in this new home. In the third stage, close relatives and friends return to her new home with birthing gifts to help the baby and herself through the first months after the birth. All of my informants in the Hardtown one-parent group repeatedly emphasised the local importance placed on the active, communal participation of family and social networks by presenting gifts to young, pregnant mothers setting up a new home.

Locally, I find several other exchanges of gifts connected with:

1. Courting between new sexual partners.
2. Courting between long-term partners wanting to move in together or get married.
3. Courting between individuals and factions from both family and social networks connected with the informal market to build up an exchange and support network and as a gesture of future cooperation (cf. Chapter 6).

The Hardtown informant sample indicates that the value and status of a woman is elevated with the birth of a child. On the other hand in the local Hardtown social context, males and females are not completely considered as adults unless they have at least one child<sup>203</sup>.

Much of these symbolic social transformations and hierarchical changes are also closely interrelated with the formation of a new residential unit and the contextual socio-economic importance of belonging to a strong, close-knit family and family networks. For example, anyone entertaining the hope of becoming or taking over the position of a Hardman must have the support of a strong family network. Bearing in mind the financial and social advantages of becoming a parent in Hardtown, it is not surprising to find several cases in my Hardtown sample where young mothers have, either consciously or subconsciously, become pregnant to speed up the transgression of the boundaries of age and status. This cuts short the time-consuming steps otherwise required for becoming an adult and a more important link in the family network.

Analysis of my Hardtown sample shows that over 80% of the homes these girls leave are poor and most had a childhood of socio-economic difficulties. I therefore suggest that as a result, many Hardtown youngsters consider that pregnancy/parenthood is the only economical way to leave home at an early age and have their own flat. When asked directly, most agreed.

## **Summary**

<sup>202</sup> In discussion, I find that these social gatherings for gift giving had a similar format. During these meetings, small sums of money, second-hand clothes, children's clothes and toys, foodstuffs and other important items 'for the baby' were given.

<sup>203</sup> It is important to bear in mind that age in the Hardtown community does not always automatically affect the transcendence to another level: other factors are also considered. Transgression rites are rarely elaborate but often follow the same symbolic structure.

I began this chapter of my thesis with the question: do residential units, family and social networks grow stronger or weaker in conditions of poverty in a socio-economically-marginal community such as Hardtown? In this study I found that the local discourse in the Hardtown underlines and emphasises the financial and emotive importance placed on a widespread nature and positive status of the autonomous, separate residential unit. Ironically, my Hardtown sample group confirmed that this combines local financial necessity with the social status of belonging to strong, closely-knit family and social networks.

By observing everyday life and listening to gossip at the community centre table, I found that family and social networks operate in a complex manner in which the daily rituals of exchange and cooperation are played out at several levels.

This study shows that the creation of any locally prestigious and powerful kinship group is not possible without the support of both women and men within these networks. It also shows that the individual talents of each of the participants are important to the network in question. It is essential that all members and not just its Hardman are skilled fighters as well as negotiators and planners.

The Hardtown women hold a strong position within the network construction as their trade and exchange of small, illegally acquired goods in the informal market are considered to be the mortar that cements the building blocks of these kinship groups and helps to keep them together.

Hardtowners have exploited the flexible and fluid (albeit fragmented) structure of their networks into its strength. This unstable yet adaptable structure is not only highly valued but is also necessary for successful negotiation and trading within the informal market. It opens up avenues for everyday survival in this suspicious, stressful even paranoid community.



## **5 Trading in the informal market or becoming a Slave to wage: Morality and immorality**

*Run away from all your boredom  
Run away from all your whoredom  
And wave your worries and cares goodbye  
All it takes is one decision  
A lot of guts a little vision  
To wave your worries and cares goodbye*

*Sick and tired of Maggie's farm  
She's a bitch with broken arms*

*It's a maze for rats to try  
And it's a race for rats to die  
Run away  
- Placebo, Slave to wage "Black market music"*

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### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I continue to map the Hardtown community by studying the contextual representations of identity, relatedness and exchange encountered within the last chapter and consider how they are linked to notions of work. I also investigate the Hardtown notions of morality and immorality and their probable link to local representations of work as contextual means of empowerment.

This study includes a comparison between statistical data in official state records with data collected during my fieldwork in the GRcc: a synopsis of information from the surveys<sup>204</sup> I conducted within my fieldwork area<sup>205</sup>, combined with information gathered during formal and informal interviews, together with my participant observation of thirty<sup>206</sup> single parent Hardtown households. The inclusion of such large population samples should add a more holistic image of the contextual Hardtown representations of legal and illegal work. This should also enable consideration of the effects of such representations on local fragmentation

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<sup>204</sup> Although I used several questionnaires, I encountered problems of access to information within all the targeted areas. My main problem was a lack of funds. While this directly affected the number of questionnaires I could afford to send out, it also meant that I could not pay my informants or buy gifts to build vital Hardtown exchange relationships. Apart from the initial help I received from Caroline U when she introduced me to her one-parent groups in Whitfield and Hardtown, I was obliged to interview and conduct all surveys on my own. Although the range of this survey may have been extended if I had access to better funding or if I had been able to enlist the help of, say, undergraduate anthropologists, with door-to-door interviews, I am not sure if the results would have been much different. The fact is that communities like Hardtown are very suspicious of strangers and, even after I had spent several months in the community trying to build up relationships, only 20-30% of my questionnaires were completed. This was a disappointing return and I am therefore only able to present a more limited version of a survey sample than I hoped.

<sup>205</sup> I compiled a number of different questionnaires during my fieldwork. The initial versions were constructed in collaboration with Professor L. Holy, who advised on the questionnaire structure, concentration and the use of specific questions for the furthest reaching and most effective analysis. In the end, I used three variations of this questionnaire in the field, the last of which was compiled in collaboration with Caroline U from OPFIS. However, although my interviewees found this questionnaire more accessible than previous ones, the returns were still very sporadic.

<sup>206</sup> Of the thirty households in this sample, twenty comprised the households of my closest and main informants: the other ten were from informants with whom I had less contact.

and dichotomised power play, which I suggest, are linked to suspicion and fear as well as everyday stress and pressure.

In my previous chapters, I ascribed the internal, local fragmentation of identity to the giro-wage, parenthood, the presence of and their participation in the illegal informal market (to gain access to commodities otherwise outside their price range), linked to the notion of dependency. Many of my informants viewed the contextual use or abuse of the benefit system as income, consistent with their life situation of continued strife and toil as well as something earned by the symbol of their dispossessed position: a giro-wage.

In everyday conversations, I encountered a constant fear of internal informants, which fuelled an on-going culture of suspicion (cf. Chapter 4). Hardtowners seemed in continuous anxiety both about detection by the law for their participation in the illegal informal economy and about being reported to the social services for the misuse or misappropriation of benefits. The resulting suspicion seemed to encompass everyone in the community and even extended to mistrust of their own close kin. This was also fused with the distrust and delineation of the outside mainstream forces as a constantly opposing evil<sup>207</sup>.

### Statistics versus statistics:

This section compares statistical data taken from Tayside's 1991 statistical consensus of the Hardtown with the statistical data taken during my years of fieldwork in the Hardtown<sup>208</sup>.

I begin by comparing the employment data found in the table of economic statistics. In this official census, Hardtown was said to have 37% in employment in 1991, compared with a total figure of 51.5% for Dundee. My sample suggested that a figure of 16% would be more realistic for Hardtown. These differences are considerable and may hold several functions or interpretations:

1. An illustration of a considerable downward trend of general employment availability within the Hardtown area and Dundee.
2. An emphasis of the present, highly impoverished position of the informants within my Hardtown sample, compared with the rest of the Hardtown community<sup>209</sup> and with the average socio-economical norm of other communities within the city of Dundee<sup>210</sup>.
3. A suggestion of a continuing trend of long-term unemployment within the Hardtown community.
4. A trend of unemployment that now also starts to encompass the new generations of young (over 16) Hardtown inhabitants.
5. A possible question mark about the accuracy of the census statistical data and whether this may have been an optimistic calculation.

<sup>207</sup> I found that my Hardtown informants often spoke of a fear of 'those evil bastards' (their description of outside forces and institutions). They also seemed to partially connect this to mainstream notions of work and of outside forces wanting to reduce them to slaves - without their consent or opinions.

<sup>208</sup> The last account of statistical data from my sample group was taken at the end of 1999.

<sup>209</sup> This includes small areas on the borders of the Hardtown.

<sup>210</sup> The statistical account of the whole population of the city of Dundee includes more prosperous areas, such as Broughty Ferry.

However, the official 1991 consensus employment data of 50% unemployment in the Hardtown, compared with the citywide medium of 40% reflects the image of a community in a socio-economically marginal and problematic position. Comparison of this data with my own, more recent, sample data of 72% showed a significant increase in unemployment. This also showed a widening chasm between the everyday life of a Hardtown inhabitant and the rest of the city. The complex socio-economic situation faced by the Hardtown inhabitants is further accentuated by the continual growth of long-term unemployment I found within the Hardtown, which is presently as high as 75%. In addition, I found that as many as 40% of the individuals within my sample had never actually been in any type of employment.

These statistics highlight the complex socio-economic situation faced on a daily basis by my main informants. In effect, this meant that they lacked any financial escape through legal employment. Instead, my informants focused their considerable financial acumen on the informal market and on negotiating the giro-wage (the Hardtown term for trying to get more money from the benefits agency).

Having no legal employment severed most Hardtowners from the networking, support, socio-economic gains and identity building associated with any 'normal' job. However, it did allow for internal network building through their participation in the illegal informal market (cf. Chapter 4).

It is interesting to compare the official data with my data on economic employment in the illegal informal market in the Hardtown community, in the table of economical statistics below. This clearly shows that the community presence, opportunity and participation within the illegal employment starkly and plainly supersede any current presence, opportunity and participation to any legal means of employment.

Bearing this in mind, one should also take into account that only 6% from my sample group objected to and did not engage at all in any kind of illegal employment or participation in the informal market<sup>211</sup>. This statistic further highlights the community's exclusion from the legal employment market and the extent to which individuals and networks within Hardtown have become dependent on illegal employment and the exchanges, support systems and communal structures this has generated.

The presence of a strong illegal employment field, exchange and support network within Hardtown is emphasised by statistical data<sup>212</sup> from an official report made between 1996 and 1999. This indicated that in all Social Inclusion Partnership (S.I.P) areas<sup>213</sup> apart from the Hardtown, crime rates decreased by some 54% in direct correlation with the citywide decline. By contrast, I found that there was a minimal decrease in crime of only 15% within Hardtown over the same period. Moreover, the decrease in Hardtown was mainly a reduction in reported violent crimes such as vandalism, whereas crimes such as housebreaking and theft, linked to the informal market, had insignificant reductions. The fact that Hardtown was chosen as one of the S.I.P areas singled out for government funding and support underlines the community's socio-economically problematic and borderline situation.

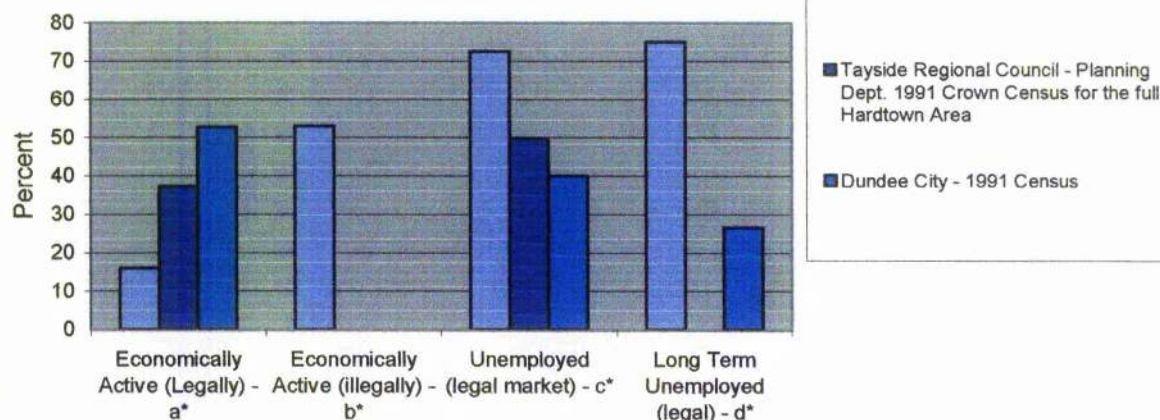
<sup>211</sup> They do not take part in any exchanges and are not supported by illegal gains or goods.

<sup>212</sup> This statistical data is from the report of a survey undertaken when the council investigated Social Inclusion Partnership (S.I.P.) areas.

<sup>213</sup> As a result of this S.I.P. report, the Hardtown and three other council estates in Dundee received government funding and support.



### Economical Statistics



a\* The data in these columns represent the percentage of individuals who are economically and legally active. They include those working full-time, part-time and the self employed but exclude individuals currently on a government scheme.

b\* The data in this column represents the percentage of the thirty individuals in my one-parent Hardtown sample who were economically and illegally active in the community's informal market during my fieldwork. Although recorded crime statistics may give some idea of the scale of the problem, direct comparison cannot be made as they do not take into account the extent of local participation in the illegal informal market's trading, procuring and cooperation. In addition, many crimes within the community, such as shoplifting, trading, muggings, gang fights over territory or goods and domestic violence spill over from the informal market and are rarely reported to the authorities. The official statistics also fail to take into account crimes committed by Hardtowners outwith the community.

(See further discussion on the levels of reported crime within Dundee and the Hardtown in the text above).

The illegal informal market includes different forms of trading, cooperation and hierarchy [1]. The above statistics[2] include illegal Hardtown activities such as: cheating the social service of benefits, stealing doctor's prescriptions or gaining them by deceit, shoplifting, housebreaking, trading drugs or illegally gained goods, car theft (either for joyriding or for use during illegal activities), mugging, assault, robbery, gang fighting and murder. Note that gang fights and murder are normally linked to Hardmen fighting each other for the control of turf, power, money and access to the best areas for shoplifting or the money and goods generated through the illegal informal market.

c\* The data in these columns represent a percentage of the individuals that are economically inactive. They include those unemployed, students, the permanently sick, the retired and others not in active employment.

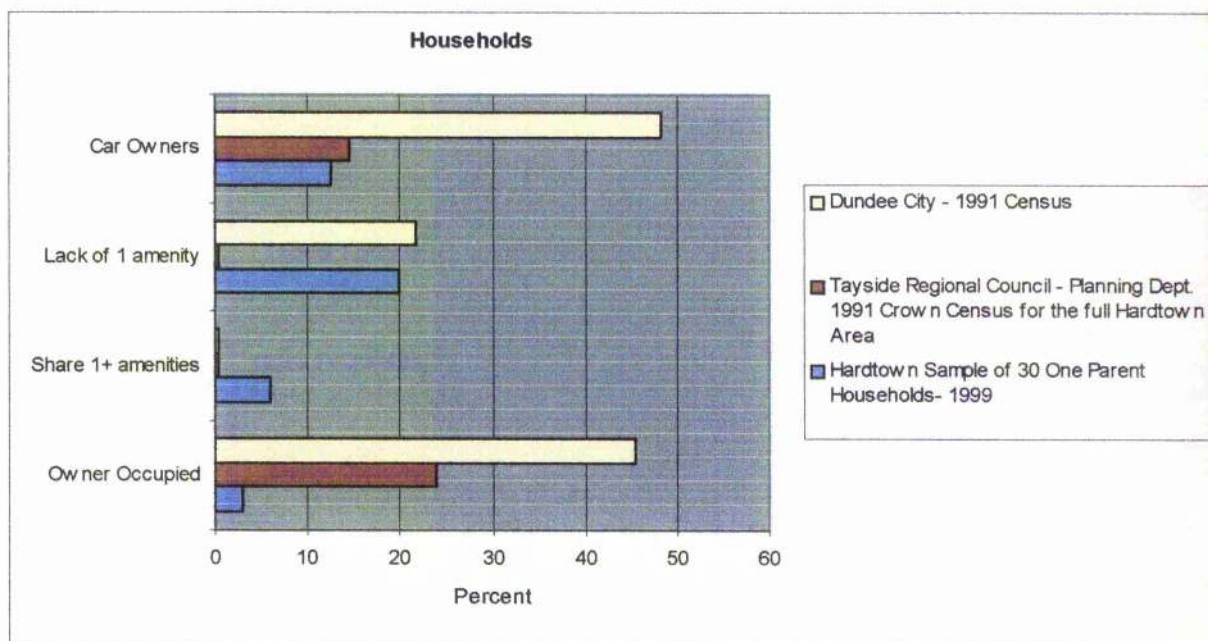
d\* The statistical data regarding the long-term unemployed in Dundee in this comparison is taken from a council report on the S.I.P. areas dated October 1999, in conjunction with the other statistical data based on the 1991 population census.[3]

Turning to a consideration of the socio-economic situation in Hardtown residential units, I found that the statistical data calls further attention to the difficult daily financial situation faced by the community's inhabitants. In particular, I found that as many as 6% of the households within my sample share at least one amenity, as few as 13% own a car and only 3%



own their own homes. Comparison of these statistics with the 1991 official census of the Hardtown and Dundee city reveals a stark difference in living conditions, indicating a vast socio-economical gulf between the Hardtown and the rest of the city's communities.

The single positive note I found in all of this negative statistical data was that the lack of household central heating in Hardtown had improved considerably since the 1991 census.



In order to add another dimension to the everyday life in this Dundee council estate other than that envisaged and encompassed by the stark facts of these statistical data, I should like to create a representative picture of Hardtown comprising fragmented images supplied by various discussions with my informants in the GRcc. This gives a much more personal and emotive description of what my informants actually feel and believe about life in Hardtown.

### *Fragmented images of Life in a community centre*

During our daily discussions in the GRcc, I was constantly quizzed about why I was in the Hardtown. I had escaped their way of life and so why would I willingly want to spend my time there? Their collective reasons for including me in a category of the marginal, instead of excluding me by my status as student, mainly seemed to be dominated by economics<sup>214</sup> and a local notion of my strangeness to the area, interrelated to a lack of support system and to British class denominations.

I presume that the more time I spent around the table with Diana, Jane, Marla and the others, a feeling of belonging and togetherness started to surface. This feeling became even stronger when Darla returned to the community after taking up employment in Manchester following her studies<sup>215</sup> and seeing the reaction from the others to her return.

It was on a Thursday and I remember clearly that my first thought was: Oh my God is that Darla?! That is a familiar face that I have not seen in ages, not since she moved to Manchester for a job.

She was walking up the street with Diana in full conversation or, rather, Darla seems to be speaking to Diana. After a few minutes of listening to Darla rambling on, Sandra says she is off home. Darla talks right through Sandra's goodbye.

*Darla – eh dinna ken wha di see in these groups they are all for losers, ken. Eh would rather be dead or bored than join that shit. Eh went to Uni, to git out of this and eh did. Now eh don't want to be connected with the community centre and the likes of them that hang out there. Eh have other kind of friends now ken. God girl ye should have seen us ye would have been proud. Eh had about 7 or 8 pills and some speed and good was eh flying, well dancing ken and eh had a good weekend with this guy eh pick up at the club.*

Suddenly turning around, I realized to my surprise that everyone who had been sitting smoking on the stairs when she turned up had left. Most of the women who frequented the one-parent group had been walking past us during Darla's monologue and, obviously ignoring her, yelled their daily greeting to me; telling me to hurry so that we could have a cup of tea before we needed to go through to the meeting.

*Diana – Nea one canna stand that bitch nea more, she seems to think she is all tha be''er than us, like. She goes off to uni and turns her back on her mates and di one's tha ha*

<sup>214</sup> I may have had a better education but, because of the financial situation of most students, they assumed that I was without a regular income. They did not see a student loan or scholarship as income and therefore assumed, correctly, that I was living on as tight a budget as they were. This allowed me to enter into conversations and exchanges about the hardship of living on a limited budget. I was not one of the 'others', the ones with an income and a house. Like them, I had to make do and go without. So, from a financial standpoint, my informants felt that they could identify with me.

<sup>215</sup> During the many conversations that took place at 'our table' in the GRcc, we sometimes strayed into the area of education. It mostly began with Jane, Diana and Marla quizzing me about my education and my presence in the community. From these conversations, it was made clear to me that a good education was not frowned upon in the Hardtown. However, it was also made clear that it was 'nothing to brag about neither', especially not if you came from 'a affy affy posh one' as they usually told me. I have to admit I did feel rather small, afraid and stressed out during these confrontations, as it felt as if everyone's eyes were focused on me. (*Mine was on them – the gaze revered?*)

*stood by her. Nea only tha, though, she always just care and talk about herself like she is summin' special, be'er than us, ken. And she is pu'ing on eh voice when she speaks an all, trying to be summin' she ain't of course. Stuck up cow!*

*Hamish – she used to be a mate an all, but after the way she treated Damon. Hey, she is no mate of mine. She is just a slapper with a bit of luck and a major user streak in her. So she went to Uni and so she got a job in London, big fucking deal. It doesn't make her a better person, she still treats people like shit and are just a fucking user, just out for herself as always. I mean she was one of us, sort of. And this is di way she treats us, when she got awa. How di ye think we all feel about it, like?*

The conversations that went on in the one-parent group after Darla left mainly seemed to reiterate that she had become ungrateful, horrible, stuck up, nasty and generally different. In all fairness, she did seem to have changed after taking that job in Manchester. Listening to all this bitching about her, I could not stop thinking of the previous September and the dinner I had at Darla's house; how she had spoken of her childhood, her fear and apprehension about the move, seemingly coupled with an infusion of new hope for her son. She also told me how happy she was to get out of Dundee, more or less for the first time. However, as usual, she soon began to talk of sex. I was used to this. Since I started attending the community centre, I was informed on a daily basis by Darla, Jane, Diana and many others in the community that my lack of sexual and drug experience was often and intently discussed. So, for the first few months, I was on the receiving end of their usual baiting and bitching. They did this with their expressed intent to try and teach me that I needed to grow up, harden and wise up if I was going to be able to become a proper player in the community. Most of my informants<sup>216</sup> did seem to be very open both in talking about and practising sex and drugs.

*Darla - Po you need to wake up and stop being so naive! You are! Well, we are good-looking girls and men dinna want to get to know you or be you friend. They want to fuck ye, ken. Eh just feel that I should tell you; well your way of thinking might get you in to trouble otherwise. This is a hard town and you need to wizen up a bit, ken. Eh, do wish in some ways that I could or would have grown up as protected as you. I would have been so different then, like. Had different choices and stuff. But, I didn't and trust me I know about this stuff, ken. Eh, dinna want to be nasty or so, you are a friend and eh just want to help you and try and make you safe, like. Well to be able to realise the realities of being here. If you want, it's probably a good idea to anyhow, to get some more experience, like. Eh ken some one that would be perfect to show you the ropes around the clubbing scene here and other such stuff. (laughter) He would be perfect, I will ask Hamish, Damon's best friend, he's a single-dad, like, to take care of you and show you the ropes.*

It is rather amusing to think that the above-mentioned single parent later turned out to be my informant Hamish. During these conversations, the surfacing ideas of morality and immorality, especially those connected with the informal economy, were interesting; but it also felt frightening to someone like me who had never considered shoplifting or giving false information to the social services.

*Jane – All this shit about nea being good, like, tha di fuckers are on about it's all a load of shit. Eh dinna think es tha odd, ken, tha we are different. We here in the toun have our kind of way of kenning about stuff like tha and di rich have ano'her. Di can affored to play by the rules and we canna! That dinna mean we are no good and di are be'er tha us, ken.*

<sup>216</sup> This applied mainly to Darla, Hamish, Diana, Jane and Marla but my other informants were equally candid.



*Diana – Eh ken wha ye mean, di there bastards think tha we dinna want or need di same as em? Well, di are fucking wrong ken! We all see the same things on the telly and we need and want the same things, like. The no 'hin, tha di gi us on the giro canna feed nea one! Eh dinna gi ye what ye need, especially nea if ye ha kids like us. Di kids see di same ads as di o'hers and di want to ha di same as em, ken. And wha am eh gonna say then? Ye canna hae it, we are poor! Nea, eh will git us what we need by borrowing it myself or gi'ing it anyhow eh can. Eh mean di bastards owe us as it is. We live like pigs so di can hae it be'er and look down on us. Its not like we hurt no one really, we only take fea em tha can affored eh and di shops are making far too much of di likes off us as it is, ken. Di all look down their noses at us anyhow di all deserve it.*

During my time in the Hardtown, the topic of having children and all the work that it entailed was frequently raised at our table. All my informants often talked with tired faces and weary eyes of the strain and hard work that having and bringing up a child was to a woman.

*Jane - Well eh ain't like ye really expect to git a job now or ever, ken. Ye are born here, stay here and never leave till ye die and tha is ye for good like. Some 'imes if yer lucky ye di will move ye to somewhere bigger in another estate, like and that is yer whole life. So what di ye ha to look forward to and to take pride in? Yer bairns and that is yer life and a yer life's work an all. Ye ha nea future, but maybe they will and so ye will ha one too!*

I even had girls as young as 14 confronting me, starting with 'Eh mean everyone else has one. I'd feel like I dinna belong!' They usually went on to ask why I did not have a child, especially after I had been in a relationship for as long as six months and then, in wonder, asked me if there was something really wrong with me.

Still deep in thought, I turned and looked across the table at Darla, Jane and Diana and realised that they all were stoned again and that a deal was going down, right that moment at our table. I was brought out of my daydreaming quite suddenly by Sandra, as she sat down with an eager expression on her face and began to tell me about her friend Lisa.

*Sandra – It is strange around these estates really. They do things based on their own rights and wrong. I mean I came from a middle class back ground and have not really seen this before and so it seems rather odd to me. Well you know my friend Lisa who I buy my hash from? She has been in some trouble lately. She hates her new in-laws and she knows that they sell drugs and cheat on their dole. Hey! Don't we all! So she decided to inform on them and get her own back she thought. Well she was reckoning that no one would really have any proof that it was her doing the informing and so they would not be able to do the same to her. Well first she had bricks thrown in through her windows. After that her husband got beaten up by his own family (her husband's sister's husband). So I guess even if they do not know for sure if it was her she is still not getting away with it.*

This story Sandra told me reminded me of some conversations that I had with Diana, especially the one when Diana came in to the community centre and threw herself down next to me, out of breath, looking rather irate and with a face resembling a black cloud. Curious and without much thought, I asked her what was up. She was quiet for what felt like a long couple of minutes, while she examined my face with angry and stern eyes. Then she abruptly told me



to come outside and talk. At that point, I suddenly realised this might be something similar to what happened that time with the young mums who were poaching on our patch<sup>217</sup>.

*Diana – Po? Di ye ken about me sister, like? Oh shit eh forgot that ye already meet her and tha. Eh have been about the streets loads lately trying to gi tha lying bastard of an boyfriend she has or rather fucking had, ken. And he will be gone too soon, mate. Ha Jane nea told ye wha have happened? Oh, eh minded tha she had. That dopey cow she would forget her head if eh was nea nailed on, like. Eh dinna wanna di o'hers to ken until it is sorted and all but eh told her ken to tell ye so ye ken where eh was, like. Ye meet him last week too, di ya not? Well me sister just found ut tha the bastard have been about with other women, like. Especially wie this girl wie a kid all by herself like and he has been saying, like, eh am helping out, ken. Yeah he was fucking helping himself more like it. And tha es nea enough while tha bastard was getting up to all sorts, he was also taking money from her and di bairns and giving it to that slag. What di ye think of tha! And then the complete bastard have been calling meh sister a slag to everyone about the toun and saying she is doing this and tha wie all sorts. All fucking lies of course, but still the fucking nerve on tha one. Does he think he will git awa wie all this does he. Our family will sort him well ut and make him realise ye dinna cross anyone in our family. Eh will git him in the end. Eh ha been sitting about his house and tha trying to catch him ut to give him a trashing. Eh almost caught him and tha, but eh missed wie a few minutes according to his sister. She has sense and that she tellt us that he was going out and are helping us to git him. She knows the score and dinna wanna git on the wrong side of us. She kens what happens to them tha goes up against our family.*

Since I first started taking an active part in discussions in the community centre, Diana and Sandra were careful to tell me on several occasions that they had been in employment. I noticed gradually through my time in the field that the rights and wrongs of work or no work was often a part of passionate conversation going on around our table.

*Jane – Eh want eh job ken. Eh just dinna ken wha tha do, like. Eh am trying to survive and eh dinna ken how to do any'hin else, ken.*

*Diana – Eh want eh job and eh have looked well hard for it before, ken. But mind ye, there is nea fucking jobs here, like. Di dinna tell ye abut tha do they! Like wha wi do is nea hard work? Us we work hard just to git by, ken. To hae enough to live on like and di tell us tha we are all shit and wrong cause of it. But some 'imes eh think, why? Well eh gi money well nea much but eh can make do with di extras eh git myself. Eh dinna just want any fucking job, ken. Eh dinna wanna spend all meh time picking up shit after others, like. And look like eh am happy about it an all. Di just dinna care abut it. They all think ye should be glad to git any'hing and yer only worth picking up shit after others. Eh mean the giro-wage di gi us and the shit jobs di want us to di, are for sure telling us what ye think of us and wha ye think we are to ye, ken. But ken eh dinna wanna be anyone's fucking slave, ken.*

*Sandra – I do wish I could or had a job, but I just cannot deal with it. Emotionally if you know what I mean! You know I am working hard now. It is a hard job to be a mother with no help to turn to. I just wish that people would get off my back and not try and make me feel so bad and lazy for not having a 'real job'. Like taking care of a child isn't a full time job in*

<sup>217</sup> During one of the single-parent group's outings a few young mums had been allowed to come with us, as some of our regulars had to cancel. While everyone was shopping these girls had taken the opportunity to shoplift, without the knowledge and/or approval of Diana. In her mind, this had placed our future outings under threat and Diana and a few others from the one-parent group had swiftly punished the girls in question.

*itself. All these people just do not know what it is like. I would not feel bad about being on the dole. Not, unless people tried to make me feel like that. I would be happy the way I am. Well if I just had a bit more money that is. To place your whole life in the hands of an employer, just seems so idiotic and I feel I do not have enough time as it is, to do what I want and have some time for myself. This idea of constant work as the proper thing to do is just government propaganda and that is all it is. Sometimes I think: I mean If you think about it, why should I need to work. This whole shit; if you don't work you're bad. I mean should I be happy to pick others shit up? I am not your slave and why should I've have to be. I mean its just a way for them to try control us and make us do what they want us to. Its stupid! I mean look for example at Placebo's song Slave to Wage it really says it all. There are not even jobs for everyone, so why all this and especially since most single parents are worse off with the jobs that they give us. I mean if the benefits they offer us reflects what they think of us, that really tell us everything.*

Moving on from the ethnographical details of these fragmented images of life and 'work' in the community centre, I now discuss and analyse the many aspects of 'work' and 'morality' as seen from the perspective of Hardtown. I begin by deliberating the contextual conceptualisations of wage-work.

### **'Eh am nea slave!'**

The Hardtown situation of long term and periodic unemployment<sup>218</sup> has led me to consider its relevance for the possible production and continued regeneration of contextual representations of work, perhaps as a means of empowerment.

### **Is there a non-working-class-ethic?**

As a starting point for this discussion, I should like to emphasize that the Hardtown must not contextually be considered as merely<sup>219</sup> a 'culture of dependency' as Howe stated (1990:235). He proposed this 'culture of dependency' was a part of a complex set of ideas that can be seen as individualism, incorporating notions of deservingness, which becomes in that moment viewed as a powerful ideology. While this ideology may reflect a commonsense understanding of the everyday world, it also hides many real causes of disadvantage and inequality. This notion has become so entrenched and widespread in our societies that it has been used as a basis for social policy-making by our governments. The anomalies thrown up by such policies are in turn interpreted by recourse to individualistic explanations and thus complete a vicious circle. Populist stigmatising political rhetoric such as this, in which inherent contradictions regarding the idea of the poor needing less and the rich more, can only continue to exist with reference to such one-sided rhetoric.

<sup>218</sup> I am here considering the existence of a historically shared and widespread interconnection, in my Hardtown samples, between continuous socio-economic marginality and the periodic employment of unskilled workers or prolonged periods of unemployment, which persist even during periods of high employment.

<sup>219</sup> Consider, for example, the words of one of my informants: *We dinna just depend on it, like. No we kinda use it and bend it in our own way ken, and we gi things of our own back too like.*

Nor indeed do I concur with Howe's proposal that the state's work ethic functions as an 'antidote'<sup>220</sup> (1990:235). How can it, given the oppositional standpoint taken by all marginal communities? In a marginal community with a continuous history of exceedingly high legal-unemployment, Howe's idea of an 'antidote' suggests that, with no or few employment possibilities, individuals are officially obliged to rely economically on benefits: they have no other choice (ibid: 235).

During my fieldwork, many of my informants emphasised that they had in fact looked hard for jobs because they detested this same stigmatised benefit dependency. However, they found that the types of low-skilled and part-time jobs available to them would be unenviable to most people and were so poorly paid that they were actually better off on benefits. As a result, they resigned themselves to a situation where they became at least partly dependent on the giro-wage. The important difference here is that, rather than using their scarce resources to try to find legitimate employment, they took steps to gain access and extra income from the illegal informal economy. The reality I found was that the Hardtowners' had a very negative opinion of legal employment, the mainstream work ethic, employers, the state and all state benefits. Most of my informants have never been in and never imagine themselves to be in full-time or any kind of legal employment. In fact, some of my informants went so far as equating legal employment with slavery. On this basis, I suggest that they neither believe in nor conform to the general, mainstream or state notions of the protestant work ethic and the virtues of the working man.

Many of my informants often told me that their families were historically not even a part of the 'lumpen' proletariat. Instead, due to generations of unemployment (glorified at times), they saw and placed themselves outside the working man's world. This agrees with F. Parkin's conclusion that when 'the division of labour became more complex, classes became more rather than less heterogeneous' (1982:98). My fieldwork also suggested that this results in either temporary or permanent exclusion of some individuals and groups from a rigid class system linked to the accessibility of legal employment.

My informants often expressed how they felt excluded<sup>221</sup> from any expectancy of ever becoming part of the mainstream world of continuous growth and wealth. The most common complaint among them was that they were living in drudgery; *we live like pigs so di others can have it be 'er*. The general notion was that others had what should also have rightfully belonged to them.

Instead of encountering a mainstream working-class ethic in the lives of my Hardtown informants, I found that the marginal community's exclusion from the labour market, coupled with their strong participation in the informal economy, suggested the local creation of a culture based on an illegal work ethic and all that this entails. This local culture seemed to be created by and opposed to most mainstream values (cf. Chapter 6). This finding agrees with Weber's proposal, cited by Parkin (1982:99), that any marginalized community such as Hardtown will 'construct a sense of its own unique "ethnic honour"'. As one of my informants so succinctly put it: *'We here in the town have our kind of way of thinking about stuff like that and di rich have another. Di can afford to play by the rules and that. We canna! That dimma mean we are no good and di are better than us, ken'*.

<sup>220</sup> Howe (1990:235) proposed that 'the work ethic with its associated values, practices, and institutions is too great an antidote. What there really is, is an *economics of dependency*'.

<sup>221</sup> Most Hardtowners' attributed their exclusion to accident of birth, lack of education and bad luck.



I suggest that Weber simply assumed that any such developed ethic would be 'immune from the denigration of outsiders' (Weber cited by Parkin 1982:99). However, the treatment that my Hardtown informants face from populist moral-political rhetoric disproves that their own development of a work-ethic or morality would succeed in sheltering and protecting them from the scorn of external institutions and public opinion. Instead, such rhetoric seems to act as a fuel for the moral indignation they feel is threatening them and their local way of life: a way of life that seems to be constructed as a defence against these same mainstream notions of work and morality. By showing a total disregard for the denigration and poverty they face daily, Hardtowners acknowledge the reality of the situation they find themselves in but also (attempt to) find their own means of empowerment.

I also found that this dichotomised Hardtown structure of the internal-external means of oppositional empowerment<sup>222</sup> played a major part in the community's creation of notions of honour, work and morality. This further disproves that contextual notions of honour would be completely immune from outside influences, which add extra pressure and stress to lives already highly fraught with internal conflicts (cf. Chapter 6).

I propose that the findings within this thesis suggest the development and construction of oppositional, rather than unique, contextual notions of Hardtown honour and morality, which are linked to informal market exchanges. These are based on and connected to notions of (non-working-class) work and internal conflicts. This dichotomy depends on internal fear of competition, informers and external<sup>223</sup> pressures as well as the Hardtowners' apprehension of and resistance to domination and disempowerment by external forces.

As briefly illustrated above, I found several ethnographical examples to support the assumption of a contextual existence of a Hardtown non-working-class ethic<sup>224</sup>. This shares some basic similarities to the principles and functions of mainstream notions of the work ethic. For example, I found that participation in the informal economy allowed individuals to identify and gain socio-economic status through their 'work'.

I discovered that status in the Hardtown was determined, not only by the individual's capacity for 'work' but especially by his/her connections, which also had an important part to play in shaping success. Consider for example that Diana seemed to have a comparatively high ranking<sup>225</sup>, leading to her economically prominent, hierarchical position within the Hardtown informal market. This was achieved, not only by her personal skill in informal market trading, but also by her extensive exchange networks, obtained through her two Hardmen brothers. This skill in 'borrowing'<sup>226</sup>, creating new connections with exchange partners and trading possibilities as well as discovering and analysing possible new areas for 'borrowing' or dealing<sup>227</sup> further ensured her local prominence.

<sup>222</sup> The Hardtowners acknowledged by their opposition their awareness and the very existence of mainstreams notions of work and morality.

<sup>223</sup> Gellner (1995:149) surmised that such internal institutions 'must need on occasion to be supplemented by the earlier instrument of social cohesion, namely external compulsion, mediated or sanctioned by menaces, fear...'

<sup>224</sup> I found that this non-working-class ethic balanced on fragments of the internally existing informal market, the externally offered benefits, periodic employment and the economic possibilities and pressures applied.

<sup>225</sup> The hierarchy in the trading of consumer goods within the informal market was acknowledged by most of the Hardtowners in the GRcc.

<sup>226</sup> 'Borrowing' was a colloquial term for stealing, particularly shoplifting.

<sup>227</sup> I found that the Hardtown marginal individual's success and reward in today's liberal world of consumerism was dependent on his/her daily participation. This was locally interconnected to work and the hierarchy within the



The informal market and its links to consumerism held a position in Hardtown, which might be compared, in its complex and intrinsic oppositional entirety, to mainstream ideas of the Protestant work ethic. For example, consider this opposition contextually against what the Hardtowners' see as moral disempowerment by the state. In their terms, Hardtowners believe that mainstream opinions have placed a yoke on generations of non-skilled-manual workers through the elevation of the Protestant work ethic.

This active, oppositional Hardtown non-work ethic and honour suggest the local construction of empowerment in the face of external dominance and pressures placed on them through the giro-wage. This seems to be the action or, more properly, reaction born out of the Hardtowners' disrespect, indifference and scorn for the situation they have found themselves in through no choice of their own. In their terminology, my informants 'wager' their opposition to attempts by external institutions and the state to dominate them through dependency on welfare. By renaming social benefits as their giro-wage, the Hardtowners are suggesting that it is a wage, earned by them for a certain kind of work. In this way, they accept welfare on their own terms and it is no longer seen as a means whereby the state denigrates or dominates them.

My informants told me often that, while they might take the benefit, they disrespected it as it was merely a poor wage for what they did and how they were forced to live: especially as it let others live *better* than they did and allowed others to look down on them from their assumed sense of superiority. Diana, Jane and many of the others spoke repeatedly of how they disrespected and viewed the state, its institutions and agents with contempt. All of this was done while trying to con the state (*to take the Mickey*) to gain access to more money and disempower the state's agents through and by their own stupidity.

Hardtown notions of work, honour and morality were flexible and closely connected with the need for immediate change in their daily survival within a difficult and fragmented environment. Informants such as Diana often emphasised how everyone in the Hardtown had to be highly adaptable if they wanted to be able to gain access to and be able to perform well within the informal market economy. Everyone felt that extra 'money' or goods through trading would make a great difference in their struggle against poverty and against welfare dependency, as the money and the self-reliance lent their everyday life and existence a new quality<sup>228</sup>.

In short, the Hardtowners' supplied me with the notion that their version of morality was what fed their families and got them what they needed. They equated immorality with the enslavement and dominance sought by outside forces through government benefits and the

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informal-market. This was something that seemed as important for the informal market player, in the face of his/her exclusion from legal employment, as it would be within the state's notion of the work ethic.

<sup>228</sup> Many Hardtowners viewed *the need to flesh-out our 'wage-giro'* as an everyday necessity that seemed to leave the acceptable boundaries of right and wrong or morality and immorality somewhat negotiable. In this way, they facilitated access and lent further choices to possible areas of 'support'. I suggest that this was locally focused on a qualitative notion of the individual's 'need and greed'. The 'need' was for the daily 'necessities' of life, such as special kinds of food, legal drugs (for example, cigarettes and alcohol) and illegal drugs, which they otherwise could not afford. The 'greed' was a yearning for commercialised consumer goods, inaccessible and unaffordable on a giro-wage. For example, Diana's 'borrowing' and trading illegal items and drugs was not considered by her or many others in the community as either wrong or immoral. Her skills in these areas were instead admired and viewed as morally right since she was *putting more food on the table*. At the same time, she was also improving her own and her residential unit's status and economy.

work ethic so that rich people could use *them* to enrich themselves more (cf. Appendix 5 for further consideration of how this differs from the state's-working-class ethic).

In the next section, I investigate further what Hardtowners consider as work.

### **What do Hardtown inhabitants view as work?**

Hardtowners spoke of regular wage-work<sup>229</sup> as merely for the unintelligent and they described workers as slaves: serfs not to consumerism but to slave labour under the yoke of a mainstream notion of morality and the work ethic. Many referred to wage-work employees as mindless individuals, exempt from a choice that they themselves had. One of my informants expressed this simply: - *'Eh ken we will take wha we need like, when we need it an all. Eh is ur choice ken'*! I interpreted Hardtowners expressions on this matter to mean that, contrary to *their* perceptions, wage workers were bent under the yoke of masters they did not see and did not understand. On this basis, anyone choosing to be in legal employment willingly accepted his/her contextual representation of slavery; a situation that Hardtowners were unwilling to accept. I found instead that the local informal market and internal exchange and cooperation partly replaced the non-existent legal employment and supplied a needed supplement to their benefits (cf. Chapters 4 and 5).

Socio-economically marginal individuals like those within my informant sample no longer seem to be prepared to accept a daily-life built on and solely dependent on the working conditions set by others through the legal employment market or the welfare agency<sup>230</sup>. They feel anger and resentment that is often voiced in daily discussions with both friends and state representatives such as social security staff. - *Why should we be happy to do your shit jobs when you want us to or when you need us to then be thrown away when you no longer need us without any real thought for our real needs. Do we look like yer fucking slaves like!*

Most of my informants did not consider receiving benefits as something inappropriate or wrong but instead considered it as their right and as a wage paid by the state to keep them quiet and manageable. However, even if they did not consider benefits negatively, they still talked of them as a way for the external powers to try to control them. It therefore became an important part of their 'work' to jokingly subvert this control with their trickery and frauds: as something that they could share among their exchange networks and acquaintances with equal amounts of pride and fear that they might be informed on<sup>231</sup>. Most of my informants took pride in finding good ways of tricking more money (*ge 'in a bigger wage*) out of the social services.

<sup>229</sup> This notion concerned constant legal employment and its workers.

<sup>230</sup> My ethnographic data, exemplified by the fragmented writing, also suggests that marginalized individuals in urban communities worldwide are more aware (thanks to global media) of the misappropriated class localization of work and income as well as their own disempowerment. This may result in a rejection of their unsatisfactory role as workers in a liberal state that is focused on mainstream notions of the work ethic. One of my informants put this very succinctly: *Eh dinna just want any fucking job, ken. Eh dinna wanna spend all meh time picking up shit after others, like. And look like eh am happy about it an all.*

<sup>231</sup> The Hardtowners' general attitude that dominated conversation around Diana's table were focused on a notion of righteousness and a feeling of being owed by others, such as the state or anyone outside the community and especially the more affluent members of society. Their trickster facade of scorn hid disrespect as my informants could in this way emphasise their right to try to trick or cajole more for themselves. My informants showed this joking disrespect and power play daily with the community centre staff. It seemed to relay and represent a strong notion of contextual empowerment in the face of the state's constant moral-economical pressure and its notion of their being dependent or disempowered by an acceptance of benefits.

In the Hardtown the best ways and means of subverting and circumventing the social services, doctors and other state representatives were considered as valuable commodities and were shared and emphasised, perhaps as a part of an exchange over a cup of tea at the community centre. For example, Diana often talked of how stupid she thought the individuals who did not try to get the best deal out of the social services were. On one occasion, she described this joking trickery as a fun and positive way of: *'ge''ing yer own back, on di fucking bastards tha try an keep us living like dogs ken'!*

During my fieldwork, I found that my informants' actions and expressions portrayed that everyday Hardtown survival was locally perceived as work. In short it was interpreted in this way since Hardtowners' existence in day-by-day, urban, socio-economic, marginality was experienced (and talked about) as continuous toil. For this reason many felt that they had to do what they could to survive and to provide for themselves and those closest to them whether or not this action was deemed legal in a court of law.

Diana and Hamish often talked about the important considerations and choices that they made daily, a description that seemed to relate to survival: to survive they had to make sure they took or created every opportunity and choice offered. In an intrinsic way, this was coupled with their notions regarding benefits, contextually described as the giro-wage. Many of my informants felt that, when they accepted state benefits, they would no longer be viewed as an active threat to the state and its ethic, which would give them leeway to incorporate the informal economy and its addition of choices into their daily lives.

In the Hardtown, a high percentage of individuals took part in the informal economy<sup>232</sup> with its highly structured hierarchy (see statistics on pp 131-132). The community held a socio-economic-based discourse of widespread acceptance and preference<sup>233</sup> that supported the importance and incorporation of the informal economy as a vital contextual notion and a representation of work.

In summary, some of the most common contextual notions expressed in my informant samples were that 'work' meant surviving in Hardtown, accepting the giro-wage, trickery and taking part in the informal market.

Turning now to another example of their contextual notions of work, I encountered an interesting moral-sexual opposition in my Hardtown informant's lives against the oppressive state institutions and mainstream notions of morality. Local importance was placed on early sexual proclivity, pregnancy and parenthood: all of which were deemed as important rites of initiation into adulthood and contextual acceptance in the community (cf. Chapter 4).

As the above fragmented images illustrate, having and bringing up children were expressed and viewed by my informants as hard work; but for some it was the only work they

<sup>232</sup> The local illegal workplace, where cooperation and exchanges placed Hardtowners in a position of opposition to the state while, at the same time, lent them local power and access to funds. It also played an important part in the ongoing power-play between state and marginal communities.

<sup>233</sup> See the positive comments made by informants regarding the informal economy in comparison with their negative emotions regarding legal employment.



could do that was not fully controlled by outside forces. The local notion of viewing children as work was also likened to the extra benefit that a child brought into the residential unit<sup>234</sup>.

On a more positive note, it was also at the same time considered as one of the main reasons for hope: something otherwise sadly absent within this marginal community. Children were also strong incentives for parents, siblings and other relatives to work in the informal economy and thus provide them with consumer goods and luxuries that were otherwise not possible with life on welfare dependency.

Consequently I suggest that within the Hardtown children are viewed as both work as well as hope. Combined with the informal economy, this further differentiates my Hardtown informants from the state-rendered work-ethic and its mainstream socio-economic ideals.

Another of my informant's contextual representations of work was daily attendance of the community centre (cf. Chapter 3). Borne partly out of boredom but in part as a subversion of external powers, many Hardtowners thought that participation in certain community centre activities would be seen as positive action by the social services<sup>235</sup>. However, attendance of the community centre was also connected to some of the other important intrinsic areas of 'work' within the marginal community. These concerned the informal market and parenthood. The centre functioned as the focal point for trading goods from the informal market and swapping information regarding the benefit system and how to get around the rules. It also served as the nucleus where support, cooperation and information could be shared between parents on how to deal financially and socially when becoming a parent.

To further elucidate the importance placed on the informal market and the local notions of work in the Hardtown. I now turn to a consideration of the Hardtowners' response to a local success story in legal employment.

### *A story of 'success' and its contextual effects*

Darla is a one-parent with a young son whom I met and talked with soon after I first went to the GRcc. At the time, she was determined to 'better herself' by attending university and finding well-paid (legal) employment. When she graduated, she was offered and accepted a job in Manchester (see the full details in Chapter 3). She later visited Dundee and I happened to be there on the day she first returned to the GRcc.

When I compared Darla's feelings before and after joining the legal-workforce with my informants' behaviour and expressed feelings towards Darla when she visited the GRcc after starting her new job, I found several interesting contrasts<sup>236</sup>. However, what I found most interesting was the Hardtowners' widespread contextual anger and disappointment at the changes they saw in Darla.

<sup>234</sup> I am not here suggesting that all my informants or other socio-economically marginal individuals get pregnant on purpose to obtain more benefits; it is only one of many factors that should be accounted for in the Hardtown financial acumen.

<sup>235</sup> For example, I found that many informants periodically attended the community centre job club for the express reason that they thought it would be viewed in a positive light when applying for additional benefits from the social services.

<sup>236</sup> Before she left for Manchester, Darla had many close friendships, relationships and networks in the community and was apprehensive about leaving Hardtown. On this brief return visit, she was very negative about Hardtown and the individuals she used to be friends with. The community reciprocated these feelings.



Her success was seen by many as a total rejection of the community's networks and functions and was felt to weaken as well as threaten the common notion and representations of work, morality and togetherness<sup>237</sup>. Consequently the opinion generally was that Darla, by turning to legal employment and at the same time moving outside the community, turned her back on the main functions and parameters of the community, former friends and support networks, thus not fulfilling her exchange obligations. She also took all the subsequent gains and benefits with her. This behaviour was seen to go against local moral values, as her gain by Hardtown rules should be shared with her family and social network.

Apart from this basic monetary reason, my informants also expressed other reasons for the powerful expressions of hostility towards Darla. These seemed mainly to originate from a common feeling of misuse and resentment, as they felt left behind while at the same time they felt they were being offended against.

What came across very powerfully was the widespread assumption by Diana, Hamish, Jane and others that Darla behaved as though she was now superior<sup>238</sup> to everyone who used to support her. This seemed to make many of my informants feel unimportant and marginalized, even within their own community, based on the exclusivity of the excluded.

These reactions clearly outline how Darla's acceptance of the mainstream legal market of employment began to exclude her and efficiently separated her from her family and former friends within the Hardtown.

The local opinion was that Darla not only accepted a mere partial use of this avenue of employment with no other options. She instead voluntarily became fully incorporated into and took an active part in this way of life, which would subsequently result in an acceptance of the principles of the state's work ethic.

I suggest that, when she made these choices, Darla effectively became transformed or transgressed into a negative 'workified'<sup>239</sup> image of her in local opinion. To her former friends, she had effectively, actively and with preplanning separated herself from themselves and their socio-economic exclusion and marginality. Thus Darla rejected both their participation in the internal informal economy and the moral positions, values and actions that this was based on. This rejection therefore became more than just a personal and individual renunciation of their friendship and community: it was a total rejection of the notions and representations found in communal, family and social togetherness and relatedness as well as its trading networks and all that this entailed.

Where daily life and survival depend on fragmented participation, cooperation and support, for example, within the informal market<sup>240</sup>, this choice might seem to a community to be a direct rejection as well as the worst kind of immorality. It was not seen as a success!

<sup>237</sup> They saw her actions as conforming to the oppressive powers of the state and its morality of conformity.

<sup>238</sup> The idea of Darla's supposed superior behaviour was repeated over and over by most of the frequenters of the community centre. Most of them focused on making fun of her, by mimicking certain negative characteristics, which were bandied about locally. General opinions of Darla subsequent to her success included: *she thinks she is better than us; she has turned her back on us; she always just cared about herself; she thinks she is special; she is stupid working like that; she is a user; she is a slut*, etc.

<sup>239</sup> In other words, she had turned herself into a working class individual from a socio-economically marginal one.

<sup>240</sup> With its oppositional moral values and lack of long term planning.

However, this was also something, which added new problematic external notions into the complex contextual and dichotomised representations of empowerment, morality and immorality within this community. If Darla could leave her marginal status and thus become incorporated into wider society, could they?

### **What and who unites them now?**

During the previous chapter I discussed the superficial communal unification-identity of the informal economy. In the Hardtown, it embodied a partial 'expression of transcendent unity' and understanding in the shared dichotomised exchanges, support and violent power-plays (Pnina Werbner 1996:90). It was also encountered in the opposition against external pressures and institutions. Hardtowners were also united by their shared history of marginality as well as their current notions of the exclusivity<sup>241</sup> of the excluded and marginal<sup>242</sup>. Other possible unifying links can be found with regards to their notions and representations of work, connected to the informal-economy, of parenthood and relatedness (Chapter 4) and a shared life in boredom and poverty.

On the basis of my ethnographic data, I concur with F Parkin's (1982:102) assumption that most of the groups or communities I encountered within the Hardtown, were singled out for exclusion, stigmatisation and marginality 'precisely because their capacity to resist has been undermined by the state powers'<sup>243</sup>. This added a weakness as long-term scapegoats of the state. However, this weakness was also paradoxically used by the community as a means of defence or persuasion to cajole more funds from certain state representatives and my informants also used this weakness as a means of recognition and togetherness.

One of the main shared factors among my one-parent informants was the high level of long-term-unemployment. This was coupled with general anger about what was perceived as exclusion from the legal-employment market. My informants also expressed a shared feeling of no longer belonging within mainstream society. Other potentially unifying links are the Hardtowners rejection of the state's Protestant-work ethic, mainstream moral culture and their life on the giro-wage.

Progressing from the Hardtown notions of work and what unites the Hardtowners, I now consider local representations of morality.

<sup>241</sup> Parkin (1982:100) surmised 'social closure' was a strong means of exclusion, limitation and legitimisation:

*"...Exclusionary social closure is thus action by a status group designed to secure for itself certain resources and advantages at the expense of other groups. Where the excluded themselves manage to close off access to remaining rewards to other groups, the number of strata or sub-strata multiplies..."* (ibid: 100), (cf. F Parkin 1974.)

<sup>242</sup> Illustrated in the above discussions and the fragmented writing.

<sup>243</sup> Considering Weber's notion of the state as a non-qualifying phenomenon of exclusion via power distribution (Weber in Parkin, 1982:100-102).

### **Immorality or contextual notions of morality?**

The work role of the individual, its network and community infrastructure seemed to be simultaneously dichotomised, fragmented and morally flexible. The key phrase within the community appeared to be 'never place all of your eggs in the one basket'. By spreading their access and choices over many areas and following in the spirit of 'divide and conquer', all of my Hardtown informants made sure that they always had more than one option. As Diana often said; *ye need choices to be safe ken. If ye canna do this ye need to be aware wha ye can do instead.*

As a result, no one in Hardtown would describe him/herself as only a trader or a thief. Instead my informants seemed to consider their working roles as movable pieces or fragments that created a fluid and transmuting individual changeable according to occasion and need. Hardtowners thus moved between deals, roles and moral ascriptions depending on what the occasion seemed to require, while at the same time proudly stating: I have done a deal!

It was this exact fragmentation and constant mobility between the Hardtown roles or ascriptions that made and lent individuals working within the dichotomised informal market such a possibility of local success: but only provided they were skilful at using this kind of transmutation. This also worked well in any intrinsic situation that combined contextually fluid representations of work with a closed, one-sided exchange with external forces, such as trying to obtain benefits. Note also how my informants used disrespect, violence and trickery as a locally considered moral means to gain what they needed from external forces<sup>244</sup>.

When they attempted to describe their feelings on the above issues of marginality and morality, many had trouble expressing themselves clearly but some of my informants referred to the lyrics of the song 'Slave to Wage'<sup>245</sup>, by the Dundee group Placebo. They felt that this song mirrored their marginal position and inequality and how they felt misused by the state.

To achieve a deeper insight into the local Hardtown notions and individual informant views on what they considered as moral and immoral, I focus next on issues the frequenters of the GRcc emphasised during our daily discussions. These discussions were mainly concerned with how someone could get ahead within the informal market; they focused on local status, exchanges, moral values and issues, as well as the importance of contextual violence, rules and punishments for: *Stepin u of line and ge ''in fresh.*

### **The informal market and contextual representations of morality and immorality**

This section is based on issues and notions, which expressly held great importance, meaning and value for my Hardtown informants. These notions were acknowledged to have great and sometimes dangerous consequences for any of the individuals involved.

**The hierarchy** of the Hardtown informal market was socio-economically structured in an intrinsic and complex way. The contextual moral code of the community with respect to the informal market seemed to be dualistic: as open and loose, as it was strict and structured. It was

<sup>244</sup> For example benefit fraud, intimidation and much more.

<sup>245</sup> See the text of this song at the start of this chapter.

open and loose because of its highly negotiable nature, depending on situational and temporary ideas of 'need and greed'. I also found an everyday requirement for an ambiguous notion of morality so that an individual could play and perform the roles and actions<sup>246</sup> needed in any given situation, job or deal. However, this was a local morality that was also highly strict and structured, hierarchically as well as spatially. This decided what, how and who was allowed to do what, where, when and with whom.

The Hardtown's hierarchical positions depended on and were governed by certain rules and ideas of moral conduct, which were both structured and strict. They were met with hard punishments if broken or infringed. For example I was informed that to attack a pregnant woman or the elderly, to inform on others or to *poach* on another's turf went against the moral code in Hardtown. My informants indicated that sanctions and punishments of an individual and his/her residential unit or network could take the form of physical violence, an exclusion from trading or other financial sanctions. Such sanctions normally resulted in a lowering of the offending individual's and his/her residential unit's hierarchical position; for example, by having his/her territory taken over. Paradoxically, this highly structured and strict moral code was at the same time also changeable and very dependent on local notions and temporal calculations of need and skill displayed at the time of the deal.

Within the informal market, a very loose and open moral code operated locally with regard to what anyone could borrow and trade. The moral suitability of items stolen or traded was of a highly negotiable nature and was mainly dependent on every individual's respective skill and his/her propensity for finding new ways to *borrow*, as well as in new areas (shops and neighbourhoods) in which to do so. Finding new ways of getting more money out of the social services and a well-played performance of violence were also locally seen as morally commendable<sup>247</sup>. Compared with mainstream notions of morality, the local moral code in Hardtown, permitted *borrowing*, muggings and other illegal acts because they were believed necessary to allow the community's inhabitants to survive.

An individual's hierarchical position in Hardtown was directly and indirectly affected by his/her personal skills, status, actions and contextual moral aptitude, interconnected with those of all the members of his/her residential unit, group, gang and family networks<sup>248</sup>.

This simplified list shows the contextual hierarchical division of status in the informal market:

1. Hardman (the most violent and ruthless in the gang).
2. The Hardman's bodyguard (violent gang members who are close to the Hardman and contribute a large amount of money and prestige to the gang).

<sup>246</sup> These actions might include fighting, theft or even murder.

<sup>247</sup> Consider, for example, Diana 'trading' in the community centre, a comfortable and convenient place for her. In the fragmented images, she expressed how the lax security in the GRCC ironically made her feel spatially and morally invisible to the police. She also felt that it lent her more face and power through her continuous act of defying outside forces such as the community centre staff and the police. This act of defiance, which 'outsiders' found hard to sanction, locally enhanced her status when she was so facetiously '*in their faces*' and acting '*well hard*'.

<sup>248</sup> Diana's skill as a trader and *borrower* increased her status and put her in an advantageous position. Her link to her two Hardmen brothers also further improved her position within the Hardtown hierarchy. This made it easier for Diana to trade and to choose whatever space ('table') and form of trading she wanted to be in, since she was considered to have the blessing and support of the local Hardmen. This also made it more difficult for anyone else to trade within the same spatial area as her as most individuals wanted to create exchange relationships with the most powerful ally in the area. It would also become a further problem especially as it would be considered as a challenge (or insult) to trade within the same area as her without either gaining her or her brothers' approval.



3. Drug dealers (big or small-time distributors of both legal and illegal drugs).
4. Fences (traders in stolen goods from burglaries, robberies etc.).
5. Muggers (of people outside the community, otherwise low status).
6. Shoplifters (a) who take orders for goods:  
(b) who steal just for their own or their household's current needs.
7. Fences (traders in stolen goods from shoplifting).

Complicating the social hierarchical divisions within the Hardtown were the often multiple and simultaneous roles held by particularly skilled and versatile individuals. The flexibility that was so admired and necessary (also) complicated any estimation of status.

In many cases, I found that the definition of anyone's hierarchical position depended on the interpreter. Most individuals and their networks obviously tried to make themselves sound and look more successful and favourable than anyone else would, as their status was partially interdependent. Still the difference between such estimates was not too wide, as individuals who tried to trade too far above their own status were sanctioned. Some occasionally tried to either emphasise the higher-valued or lesser-valued occupation, but I found that in most cases a general approximation between all the different valued occupations or jobs seemed to be used. The timing of such an estimate was also of importance as status could and did change from one successful (or unsuccessful) job to another<sup>249</sup>.

Considering the above most commonly expressed Hardtown hierarchical divisions of status linked to the informal market, it was suggested that a high position in the hierarchy was dependent on many different aspects such as:

1. How hard, tough and violent the individual was (see Chapter 6).
2. The skill of the individual and of his/her residential unit, family and social networks in both speaking and doing violence (see Chapter 6).
3. How extensive, stable and *close* the individual could create and maintain his/her trading, support and swapping networks (see Chapter 4).
4. His/her personal skill for opening up more venues to resources (see Chapter 4).
5. The skill of the individual and of his/her residential unit, family and social networks in trading and procuring items to sell (see Chapter 4).
6. The skill of the individual in controlling his/her 'patch', residential unit and networks (see Chapters 4 and 6).
7. The individual's coercive powers (see Chapter 6).
8. The individual's 'name' or reputation within the community.
9. Occasional public declarations of the individual's 'marginality' to demonstrate that he/she had not sold out or given in (as in the case of Darla).
10. Many other aspects were considered but were generally thought of lesser importance.

<sup>249</sup> Considering the hierarchical position of Hamish, there were many aspects to and several different estimations of his social standing, which all played a part in his status in the community. Hamish had a high position because he was seen as a *well bad-fighter*! He was closely connected with a large gang that held large patches and so had important and valued access to extensive resources. This locally created the view of him as connected through an extensive social network. Some of the Hardmen in the community also seemed to value him highly as he was considered a good man to have along on violent crimes. Hamish was said to be skilled at planning crimes and did not speak about what he had done at the wrong time, which also added to his good reputation. He was considered to have mental aptitude, as he was able to speak for himself and was skilled in both doing and speaking violence, suggesting strong coercive powers. However, the fact that he held no long-term or biological Hardtown family network links hampered his social position: such connections could have added more strength to his status and extended his trading possibilities, by increasing the amount of possible support he could call on. His links to the more affluent area of Broughty Ferry also negatively influenced his progress up the Hardtown hierarchical ladder.

**Turf or patch** is the contextual notion of ownership of a particular area or space. The extent of such an area is variable and can be spatially attached to a table in a community centre (see Chapter 2) or to a street corner (see for instance the opposing 'street corner and mainstream-culture' found by U. Hannerz (1969) in the ghetto in Washington D.C.). This may also extend to a neighbourhood of flats or a building (often claimed by smaller gangs), several buildings in different areas of a community (usually by cooperating gangs or a large gang), or perhaps a community, several communities or even a whole city (by one or several Hardmen).

Spatial ownership is in part transformable and negotiable as well as dichotomised (see Chapter 2). It has a format, which is also paradoxically ambiguous and strictly structured. It encompasses intrinsically and on many levels, individuals, factions and networks, which all claim their rightful ownership and demonstrate public feelings of belonging to and within the specific locality.

I found that belonging to a neighbourhood did not automatically give anyone the right to trade in all of its spaces: not even when he/she and others might consider him/her included in the contextual notion of ownership<sup>250</sup>. However, contextual notions, interconnected with levels of specific degrees of ownership, did have various meanings for different individuals, networks and gangs as well as Hardmen. A piece of turf could therefore be locally estimated to belong to several factions or individuals at the same time<sup>251</sup>. This occasionally led to power struggles and violence due to confusion and anger.

Notions of ownership could, for example, mean the individual's right to:

1. Call something his/her own property.
2. Walk or spend time in an area.
3. Trade within the illegal informal market.
4. Steal, housebreak, pickpocket, shoplift, mug, etc.
5. Fight in retaliation if other gangs, Hardmen or their networks infringe on his/her turf. In this case, he/she is obliged to fight to defend his/her territory and punish the rivals, using any means available – up to and including murder.
6. Oversee and make decisions about all general activities in the area, particularly if he/she is a Hardman, part of a Hardman family or has high status in a gang.

However, it is imperative to consider that the right to do something in the Hardtown also includes a range of obligations.

At one level, control of Hardtown space was viewed as mainly resting in the hands of the Hardmen, who could assign or take away someone's power, position, financial standing, access and, the ultimate sanction, life. This gave the Hardmen the rights and obligations that

<sup>250</sup> For example, Diana felt that she *belonged* equally in her flat, her block of flats, the high rise, the community of Hardtown, the community centre and especially our table at the community centre. However, she often preferred trading within the community centre, instead of trading within her neighbourhood high rise or anywhere else in the community. She stated that this was due to her personal preference, which had made her ask her Hardman brothers for space in the GRcc. Subsequent to her request, the table and centre had been allocated to her by the Hardmen and thus if she left and took her trading outside the centre, this would challenge their power.

<sup>251</sup> For example, I found that certain areas within the GRcc were claimed simultaneously by the informal market-trading network, by individuals participating in legitimate community centre group activities and by members of youth gangs for their meetings.

can either empower or disempower individuals, factions and networks. At the same time the Hardmen gave these same individuals, factions and networks temporary permission to (on their behalf) affect changes and disempower others they found trading on their 'patch' or breaking the contextual moral codes. This was enabled and viewed as a right given by and an obligation owed to the Hardmen when they were ascribed this space: a right and obligation for which they were, of course, paying the Hardmen in money and goods, by keeping order and being loyal.

Often without the need for Hardmen interaction, Hardtown individuals, factions and networks fought, punished and sanctioned each other on a daily basis<sup>252</sup>. The more desirable and lucrative the *patch* or *turf* anyone was ascribed, the more money, goods and status he/she was likely to acquire. The successful careers in trading and the status in the informal market ascribed to my informants, Diana and Hamish, suggest that a Hardtown individual's ability can be instrumental in altering not only their own but also their faction's power, position and economy and *vice versa* (cf. Chapters 2, 4 and 6).

Little by little, I found that a career within the Hardtown informal market was more difficult and dangerous than it first seemed and sounded during the talks around Diana's table. Violence was a fundamental part within the illegal informal market, with its continuously fluctuating exchanges and negotiations (see Chapter 6). This made trading and claims of ownership such an inherently complex process that, as my informant Hamish expressed it, always needed a lot of *streetwise* or *street smarts*. The opinion of most of my informants was that a wide variety of knowledge, skill, connections, support and cooperation were considered as vital components for a successful career within the informal market. For example, Diana always emphasised to all of her contacts the importance of keeping informed and up to date on all daily, weekly or monthly exchanges, as well as, *havin nea problem wi bein or doin wha was needed*, within this intrinsically fluctuating power game.

I found that becoming involved in a very economically rewarding illegal activity could extensively affect someone's individual status and the *patch* that he/she would be rewarded or could work. The longevity of the illegal activity also counted in the equation of his/her social and economic hierarchical position. The stability of his/her position also partly depended on activities of local illegal empowerment and the stability, structure, spread and continuance of the activity or commodity access route.

For example, Hamish's former affiliation with a Hardtown gang was connected with one main piece of *turf* owned by his gang and worked by his gang. In common with all other Hardtown inhabitants, he was also considered to belong to the communal *turf*. On a more personal level, he also held specific pieces of *turf*, both within and outside the community. These were locations that were ascribed to him by the Hardmen and the gang: areas where he bought the rights to perpetrate crime. However, if his skill waned, his position would also weaken and others might (by violence) take over some of these pieces of *turf*. They might also be taken away from Hamish and given to a new more successful applicant by the Hardman. This kind of local disempowerment could be facilitated by either a long streak of unsuccessful jobs, not doing well in fights, losing connections or because of an affront perpetrated against the Hardmen and their closest cronies.

<sup>252</sup> Control, power and financial standing did fluctuate and were dependent on individual, factions and networks capabilities at that time and place. This occasionally created fast changes in rights to a *turf* and could easily change an individual's or faction's power, status and allegiance.



By naming and claiming ownership of a specific space and thus compartmentalising it, even in such a negotiable form, my informants were effectively claiming the space on more than one contextual level. I propose that any division and appropriation of the community space by the locals could be considered as a notion of empowerment. The informants are through their illegal trading making the local space theirs, while as they express, reducing the power of outside forces<sup>253</sup>.

Differences of opinion between representatives of spatial ownership in the Hardtown often led to violent gang warfare: fights, crime sprees, break-ins and murders. This could be considered as acts of spatial empowerment that are used to reify their claims.

*Trading*<sup>254</sup> is the contextual notion of all illegal activities connected to the informal market in the Hardtown. Trading exchanges, support and cooperation in the informal market held an important, intrinsic and complex place in the community's notions of relatedness, for ascription of parenthood, maintaining family and social networks and acquiring luxury goods (cf. Chapter 4). It also contextually supplied a means of communication that breached the boundaries between different factions and individuals as well as the powerful Hardmen. This made it a method of acquiring a local notion of togetherness and inclusion as well as division.

Through trading and *working* (meeting, cooperating and exchanging) with family, friends and other individuals within the informal market, Hardtowners also gained access to further networks, which in turn gave even more access to commercialised consumerism. It also locally became simultaneously a means of control and coercion through the same ways of sharing and uneven contributions, linked to consumerism and poverty<sup>255</sup>.

Trading embodied a flexibility, which made it possible for individuals to negotiate through the fragmented dichotomy in the internally continuous power play. Learning how to adapt and work in the internal power struggle became a vital part of the contextual notions and representations of trading as *work*. For example, Diana held a high social position, with wide access to local resources within the Hardtown. This position was made possible by her fragmented, but skilfully negotiated, connections to many areas of the informal market, such as her skill in trading and *borrowing*, her extensive networks (cf. Chapter 4), her fighting prowess (cf. Chapter 6) and her Hardmen relatives.

I found that some of the specific illegal actions undertaken within the informal market in the Hardtown seemed to reduce the individual's identity and the community's recognition of it to an embodiment of their main occupation. My Hardtown informants seemed to consider someone's illegal occupation as a tool for representing and compartmentalising these specific

<sup>253</sup> By claiming, dividing and working their local space, they were effectively disempowering any possible infringement by outside forces, which would, in their opinion, surely take place otherwise.

<sup>254</sup> At its simplest level, trading could mean the local selling, exchanging, buying and receiving of stolen goods and drugs (both legal and illegal). However, the term was also used in a more general sense to mean 'services' connected to the informal market: shoplifting, housebreaking, robbery, burglary, mugging, assault and murder. Trading was also interconnected with all other areas of the informal market: coercion, control, punishment, inclusion/exclusion and the regulation and extent of power and success of individual networks and affiliations (cf. Chapter 4).

<sup>255</sup> Trading was of intrinsic importance for the acquiring of funds, support, relatedness, togetherness and social status. It also offered a venue or space where individuals were awarded the local right and obligation to perform violence. It therefore contextually represented many simultaneous aspects of individual, factional, gang and network actions connected with local power and powerlessness.



individuals, factions and their networks. For example, Hamish was known to be a 'bad gang-fighter',<sup>256</sup> and a 'hard-robber', more than he was considered a trader within the community. Diana was mainly seen as a trader and a borrower as well as a 'Hard-sis' (Hardman's sister)<sup>257</sup>.

**Borrowing**<sup>258</sup> is the local term in the Hardtown informal market for shoplifting. This was the most commonly accepted and widespread daily illegal activity for supplementing someone's impoverished everyday existence. Shoplifting was not restricted by age: children as young as five and old-age pensioners participated daily in different kinds of shoplifting. It took many different forms: individuals working alone or with regular or temporary partners, youth gangs working together and gangs of organised adult shoplifters.

Diana, Jane and Hamish and my other informants viewed and described *borrowing* and trading as the main local means of accessing resources both from within and outside the community. At the same time it was conceptualised as hard work, because it was usually necessary to *borrow* something on an everyday basis. As Diana, one of my main informants, suggested: 'Ken if yea wanna gi a bra life, like. An gi yer bairns wha di need. Ye need to get about and ye need tea work hard like. Nea one gi fat on doing nout!'

*Borrowing* was most commonly undertaken outside the community: as one of my informants succinctly stated: 'eh would'nea shit in meh own backyard like!' It was usually undertaken during the day, while my informants' older children were at school and the other younger children spent time in the local community centre's children hours. This timetable ensured that they were back from *working the toun*, to pick up the children from school and/or centre and to make their dinner on time. Smaller children and particularly children in prams were often brought along during a working day of *borrowing*. For some, this was because they had problems finding suitable baby-sitters. However, Lisa and many other Hardtowners used their babies to disguise their purpose and also used the babies' prams to hide *borrowed* items in the shops and in the street outside<sup>259</sup>.

Skill and status were not specifically attached to the activity of *borrowing*, but rather to the success of the activity. It did not matter if any one individual or several in cooperation perpetrated the job. My informants expressed the view that their idea of success depended on whether the individual or group were successful in inventing a new and profitable way of procuring goods that were:

1. Needed for personal use, trading or special occasions, such as birthdays.
2. Highly valued, contextually and financially.

<sup>256</sup> *Bad* and *evil* were words which, in the vernacular of the Hardtown informal market, meant that someone was very good at something. Other equivalent terms included: *hard*, *tough*, *cool* and *all that*.

<sup>257</sup> In the Hardtown, it was important to recognise someone's relatives if they, as in this case, could improve the individual's status and at the same time made the individual partially dangerous to trade, talk to or work with. I also found that Hardtowners' family, residential unit, gang and network affiliations influenced their status and representation within communal opinion in an intrinsic cooperation with their respective occupations, notions of spatial ownership and fighting prowess.

<sup>258</sup> While the term *borrowing* meant shoplifting, it could also be used in the more innocent context of borrowing something from a friend or relative. Someone going shoplifting would tend to say 'Eh am going awa borrowin' somethin', ken' or 'Eh am going awa to toun'.

<sup>259</sup> They hope to make store clerks assume that they would not perpetrate a crime with a child present.

By observing my informants' discussions and trading, I found that a contextual failure was when someone returned with items that could not be successfully or easily exchanged. If someone failed repeatedly, his/her status in the informal market was affected negatively and he/she became viewed as a liability (cf. Jane's status in Chapters 3, 4 and 6)<sup>260</sup>.

I found that there was a contextual daily need and greed for certain consumer items. Hardtowners were as vulnerable to rampant commercialism and media advertising as anyone else and felt the need to compete with others within the fluctuating power dichotomy, both within and outside the community.

The need to compete with others was given by Sandra, Diana, Hamish and some of my other Hardtown informants as the reason why more and more individuals, families and social networks '*start doin the rounds*'. What they meant was that it was an almost daily routine for individuals and groups supplying the informal market to go around their *turf* taking orders for particular items, which they subsequently acquired for trading, swapping or gifts<sup>261</sup>.

Within the Hardtown notions of morality, shoplifting was not deemed immoral, which is why it was locally viewed and ironically called *borrowing*. Many Hardtown informants involved in *borrowing* or trading explained that there are several reasons why it was right and not wrong to acquire items by *borrowing*: '*ken, we are just taking what di owe us.*', '*near one is losing naught on this.*', '*eh as near like di will even notice eh.*', '*di ha so much ken and we di' nna ha much, so eh is only right to make up the score like.*', '*ken eh am a right modern robin of the hood like, he, he.*' (See also Diana's statement above). I found that many of the individuals and gangs that *borrowed* on a daily basis did not view it as a real crime as they felt that it did not hurt anyone or affect anyone who would be seriously impaired by the loss. They felt instead that the affect that it had on the Hardtown standard of living was so positive that this in itself seemed to render it as affirmative action.

The Hardtowners argued that it did not directly affect any specific individuals but only an abstract notion of a spatial denomination in the form of a building or shop<sup>262</sup>. Seen in these terms, the shops belonged to unknown and 'outside' forces and powers, which were a faceless and impersonal presence with a corporate market image. I suggest that their ascription of a faceless and 'outside' status to shops and external victims conceptualised the act of *borrowing* into, not only a Hardtown moral act providing them with necessary sustenance, but also into an empowering act against outside forces. As my Hardtown informants felt that these external forces and institutions owed the community and its individuals something, they were only liberating what was or should be rightfully theirs.

**Respect** is an important notion within the illegal informal market and more generally within the Hardtown. Individuals were contextually expected to earn respect, either by their own actions or through their family and social connections. The highest respect and status was

<sup>260</sup> I found that most frequenters of the community centre considered Jane was of low status, due to her lack of proficiency in *borrowing* and her overall bad choices in what to *borrow*. As her partner Diana often stated; '*Ye need to ken wha to gi and nea only how to gi it! Nea like Jane who dinna ken how to gi anything, nea wha to gi! Ye ken wha people want if yer any good or ye will ha to ask, an all*'.

<sup>261</sup> This also reduced the chances of *borrowers* acquiring the less locally commercial goods.

<sup>262</sup> My sample group felt that it would only affect large concerns, factories, the rich and the market. These were impersonal notions and representations that held no actual emotional ascription of relatedness. The impersonal nature ascribed by them to shops seemed to objectify the action and eviscerate any personal notions of affinity.

contextually given to the community's Hardmen<sup>263</sup>: men who in turn were obliged to consider and govern<sup>264</sup> their *turf* and the individuals living there, especially their own family and social networks.

Any breaches of this respect called for retaliation and punishment. The harshness and character of the punishment were often meted out with regard to the severity of the breach of respect. It also depended on who was targeted by the particular breach of respect<sup>265</sup> and by whom.

When any breach or lack of respect was directed specifically against a Hardman, the response was always flamboyant, public and severe. This seemed to be used as a deterrent, which publicly emphasised the social disturbance caused by the offending action. It also made sure that the offending individual was severely and publicly shamed and punished, so that the Hardman did not lose any of his status or reputation within his *turf*, his family, his networks, his community or his interactions with other Hardmen. By doing this, he ensured that the local rules and sanctions functioned well enough to control the informal market and the community hierarchy.

When the breach or lack of respect was directed at someone in the Hardman's family or social networks, the reaction was usually harsh, albeit not quite as severe as when direct and personal confrontations with the Hardman occurred. If members of the Hardman's own family, social networks or closest business gang perpetrated the breach, I found that the response was similar. However, the Hardman usually tried to make a warning example of any such individuals: with no exceptions, not even close family members.

Among others in the community, any signs of lack of respect were closely monitored. Retaliation was undertaken against offending individuals either personally or by an individual or several individuals from the family or social networks of the offended person. As with the Hardmen, I found that punishments were not ignored, even if the culprit was very close to the offended person. For example, the fragmented images earlier in this chapter showed how my informant Diana reacted to a domestic situation involving her sister<sup>266</sup>.

<sup>263</sup> It is interesting to consider the dominance and importance of the Hardman and of the informal market for contextual social togetherness and cooperation (even though the wholeness is fragmented) through Weber's ideas on the binding of societal structure. For example, Parkin (1982:71) suggested that 'societies and their lesser parts are held together not so much through contractual relations or moral consensus as through the exercise of power' as the thread 'that runs through Weber's political sociology'. Throughout my fieldwork, I found that the community recognised the power of the local hierarchy and considered the state as the enemy. Therefore, the willingness of obedience to the state that Weber suggested as a response to dominance, which otherwise should 'be treated as something other than domination', is very questionable and is disproved by my thesis (ibid:74).

<sup>264</sup> Govern in this sense means to keep in order, to support, to facilitate trading, exchanges and cooperation, to regulate the community and the informal market as well as to punish, control, coerce and extend networks.

<sup>265</sup> There were several kinds of actions, which were counted as breaches against community morality or lacking in respect. These breaches included trading, stealing, mugging and assaulting or in any other way getting involved in the informal economy in the *turf* of a Hardman, his family or his social networks, spatially or occupationally, without his permission. Other breaches included assaulting an individual within his network or doing something that put him and his business under threat. In particular, I found that informing on someone or speaking against a Hardman, his ideas and his orders were considered serious offences.

<sup>266</sup> Diana's sister had been shown disrespect by her boyfriend: he had hit her, spent his money on another woman and cheated on her, while he spread rumours around the community that she was promiscuous or as Diana stated; *a slag*. This led to Diana and other relatives chasing the offending man down the street, waiting outside his house to beat him up and calling him repeatedly to threaten him and his family. By his lack of respect for their sister, his behaviour had been viewed as a threat against their Hardman family network's reputation and, therefore also their status in the community. As Diana stated: '*eh the fucking bastard is well out of order, ken. Eh ken who eh is*



Within the Hardtown community and its informal economy, it was important, if not vital, for everyday survival to have respect and to be treated with respect. My informants expressed that for them it had become an important part of the community's social structure. The fragmented structure and dichotomised power play within Hardtown networks led to a continued succession of individuals, gangs and networks in conflict with each other. In many cases, real or imagined offences and actions lacking in respect were cited as the cause.

On an everyday basis, a complex and difficult process of communication within this fragmented and dichotomised community led to open as well as insinuated hostility. This led in turn to further stress and resulted in fragmentation, fear, suspicion and anger. Most of the communication between individuals within the community can be seen as a verbal violence of continued banter, baiting and *trying it on*<sup>267</sup>. By doing this, Hardtowners tried to gain or accumulate further strength, respect, reputation and status both within the community, in their family and social networks, and in the informal economy (cf. Chapter 6).

**Informing** is contextually considered as the worst breach of the moral code within the informal market and, more generally, within the Hardtown community. The biggest fear of most Hardtowners was the notion that one of their own would turn into an informer for the police or the social services. This was actually very easy to do, as there was a specific free-phone number, which anyone could call and anonymously inform on other individuals in Dundee. This meant that anyone who was informed on might have to face a visit from the authorities.

Many of the Hardtowners talked of this phone number as the means for the weak and powerless individuals who could not play the trading game well and therefore instead tried to get revenge or power by removing any competition. It was also widely discussed that some informed on others when the police had caught them, to *cut a deal* and to shorten sentences. These were locally viewed to be less than enlightened in the criminal process or just weak.

This particular breach of the Hardtown's social notions of morality and respect, within the dichotomised struggle against outsiders, external influences and their agents, are therefore severely socially, verbally and physically punished. Physical punishments and sanctions vary but often involved an element of 'poetic justice':

1. A beating administered by individuals from his/her own residential unit
2. A beating administered by individuals from the informant's family or social network.
3. A beating administered by the Hardman himself.
4. A beating administered by the Hardman's family or social network.
5. A beating administered by the individual or individuals who had been informed on, their residential units or their family or social networks
6. One or any of the above might also physically scar the informer, using either a bottle or a knife.

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*messing with like. Ye canne just leave that kind of thing. Eh ken di bastard both spent their money on another and then was badmouthing her like'. A similar notion and representation of fear of losing status and reputation was displayed by the immediately aggressive and violent behaviour of Diana, Jane, Maxine and several other members of the one-parent group towards four young one-parents whom they felt had infringed their turf. As Diana and the others expressed it later, these four had shown them nothing but disrespect, even though they had allowed them to accompany them on their one-parent group excursion (cf. p 138).*

<sup>267</sup> *Being in someone's face* and *trying it on* were both contextual local expressions for individuals who were showing a lack of respect and were looking for a fight.



7. One or any of the above might also break the informer's limbs, often in a very public and dramatic manner.
8. For minor infringements, they face destruction or defacement of property
9. As a final warning before killing an informer, his/her residential unit is *torched*. This is done by pouring some flammable liquid through the letterbox and setting the place alight, thus hampering the chance of anyone leaving the residential unit.

In many situations and depending on who had been informed against, the offending individual's household members, family and social networks, would also be affected in some aspects by these local punishments, sanctions and retaliations. The only way to avoid such retribution would be for them to take immediate action and punish the offending family member themselves, as they may become less trusted in any trading or other acts within the informal economy<sup>268</sup>.

The shared sense of social and moral responsibility in such situations meant that the informer's own networks were forced to try to 'punish' the offender. It also obliged them to make the punishment very harsh and public. This demonstrated that they had taken a moral stance on the offence and publicly distanced themselves from the offending individual. This partially shared moral responsibility severely complicated matters of retaliation and immoral behaviour, especially in cases where the offending individual had informed against someone inside their own household, family or social network<sup>269</sup>.

To trust anyone, even your own partner or family was contextually considered to be both foolish and naïve and was widely seen as a sign of someone with a lack of intelligence, knowledge and moral fibre<sup>270</sup>. For example, consider the events within the above fragmented imagery, where Sandra's drug dealer and friend informed against her own sister-in-law to the social services and the police. Retrospectively, she had her windows broken by bricks, her husband beaten up on several occasions by his own family as a response to her (suspected) breach of social morality (cf. the culture of suspicion in Chapter 4).

### Summary

This chapter considered the state rhetorical conceptualisation of the poor and marginal as undeserving, connected to the notion of work and the Protestant work ethic, rendering the identity of the marginal individual as a social 'outsider'. The status of the 'outsider' was conceptualised by state suggestions of moral delinquency and further maintained by notions of economic exclusion and welfare dependence.

<sup>268</sup> Even if they take such immediate action against the informer in their family, they might still be verbally abused, threatened with violence or have violence done upon themselves or their property, particularly if the Hardman feels that they did not punish the offender sufficiently. Whatever action they take, they are likely to find themselves socially ostracised, at least for a period of time.

<sup>269</sup> The guilt of an individual is often based on rumour and not much proof is needed. If the offence is considered serious enough to require severe punishment, the final judgement lies with the Hardman. However he can never be seen to act weakly and approval is most often given. I should like to add that this rumour mill is often seen to be right, as individuals monitor each other's behaviour and lifestyle very closely.

<sup>270</sup> Most of my informants emphasised that they had learned the hard way not to trust anyone, least of all someone close to them. They took the view that anyone could sell anyone else out if it could win them status or gain. They added that anyone trusting implicitly was considered stupid and '*just waiting to be had*'. In their terms, if anyone decided to *take out* (maim or kill) someone that showed this lack of intelligence, it would not be considered as an immoral act.

Paraphrasing Richard Tawney's ironical statement, over fifty years ago: the problem of marginality and poverty is not the fact that there are poor people, but rather that there are rich people. With this in mind, I have tried to readdress these notions through the behaviour, knowledge and everyday life of the Hardtown informants.

I have presented the contextual notions of work and morality that existed within the Hardtown. These are fragmented and dichotomised in structure, but closely connected to the informal market, to parenthood, and a dichotomised opposition against mainstream moral ideals, such as the mainstream work ethic.

This indicates that, in the Hardtown, work has largely ceased to be related to legal employment. Over the past few decades, there has been a continuous lack of non-skilled or semi-skilled jobs in Dundee, which has led to a high percentage of long-term unemployment within Hardtown. This has led to the local belief that no employment would be forthcoming now or in the future. As a result of the marginality and poverty of the welfare culture, many have turned instead to the lucrative illegal employment sector to supplement their benefits and provide their families with consumer goods, which would otherwise be beyond their means. Many also believe that legal employment and welfare are a means of control, coercion and slavery perpetrated by outside forces and agencies of the state.

Instead I found that Hardtown notions of 'work' were linked to the informal economy and illegal occupations such as *borrowing, trading, mugging and robbing*.

For my informants' lives of marginality, parenthood, attending the community centre and receiving the giro-wage, as well as taking part in the informal economy, have also come to represent contextual notions of work.

I have also shown that the informal economy is based on an ambiguous, unstable and highly negotiable, hierarchical structure, linked to living in the here and now. This structure struggles hard to negotiate between the paradox of ambiguous and daily changeable moral imperatives. The Hardtown holds some clear moral imperatives of right and wrong, such as: do not hurt pregnant women, children or the elderly. However, this morality is interrelated with the hardships of daily survival and creating success within the informal market. This has led to an inversion of mainstream morality in a number of key areas and the most immoral 'crime' against the community is informing the authorities of the contextually acceptable and moral activities of the informal market.

In a similar inversion of what would normally be called a success story, I found that the general, communal opinion of Darla's participation in legal employment in Manchester was construed as her bowing down to slavery and turning her back on the community.

Moreover, if considered within the wider perspective of the UK state machine, which couples the notions surrounding mainstream work-ethic with the ideology of Thatcherism,<sup>271</sup> I inquire: 'Why should the marginal community-individual not want to incorporate notions of liberality or maximisation in their ethos and ethics too?'

<sup>271</sup> Thatcherism is an ideology that promotes individuality and socio-economic maximisation (looking to yourself first and foremost), while communal and other cooperation is of secondary importance.

This brings to mind the economically state-dependent 'bad mother' (cf. discussion in Appendix 4), which in turn leads me to ask the following questions, based on a very simple argument: 'If this liberal consumerism is good enough for everyone else why should I, as a socio-economically marginal individual, not maximise and individualise all my capacities, choices as well as moral values; and why should I, individually and contextually, place my notions of communality and cooperation secondary?'

## **6 Hardmen in the Hardtown, 'the Criminally inclined'? - Power and violence as contextual discourse**

*'Not a bad looking sight, actually. The streets are clean and tree-lined and curve gracefully through red-brick buildings with freshly painted white trim. Small hedges and squares of grass lie under most first-floor windows. The fence encircling the garden is upright, rooted, and free of rust. As far as projects go, Old Colony is one of the most aesthetically pleasing you're apt to find in this country.*

*It has a bit of a heroin problem, though. And a teen suicide problem, which probably stems from the heroin. And the heroin probably stems from the fact that even if you do grow up in the prettiest project in the world, it's still a project, and you're still growing up there, and heroin ain't much but it beats staring at the same walls and the same bricks and the same fence your whole life ...*

*... Schools don't work.'*

*'Not the public ones,' I said.*

*'Public? Look at the morons coming out of private schools these days. You ever talked to one of those disaffected prep-school fucks? You ask 'em what morality is, they say a concept. You ask 'em what decency is, they say a word. Look at these rich kids whacking winos in Central Park over drug deals or just because'.*

*-Dennis Lehane, *Gone, Baby, Gone*. 1998*

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### **Fragmented writing**

I cannot count how many times I was present at a daily violent 'power-game' during my fieldwork: watching two or more people egging each other on, bitching continuously, and then suddenly having a fight, totally unexpectedly and without any direct prior warning, such as a change in the tone of voice or body language.

This is perfectly illustrated by a scene I watched on a weekday not long after I started my fieldwork.

I was just standing talking to some of the girls from the one-parent group after having left the company of Hamish and his friend Kenny. I had been listening to them bitching at each other as they sat, smoking as usual, outside the community centre. I spent over an hour watching them, out of the corner of my eye, as they continued to taunt and try to push each other over the limit: each using vulgar personal and sexually explicit barbed baits to try to get a rise out of each other, all the while smiling and laughing. In common with most others in the community, I had by this point started to appreciate the dexterity of this kind of violent verbal fencing. However, I must say that I was rather surprised when suddenly, without any warning and still smiling, Hamish leaned forward and hit Kenny straight in the face.

Kenny hit him back, without any hesitation. They then spent about 10 minutes striking each other, mainly in the face, in a rather exaggerated stylistic fashion. They were taking on an



almost dramatic air, with no pauses and with totally straight faces. As suddenly as it began and again without warning, they stopped fighting and laughingly began to dust themselves off. Nobody else there seemed either surprised or shocked by what happened and no one tried to break up the fight. Instead, everyone started shouting out bets on who would get the best punch in, as well as a plethora of cheeky comments regarding their performance, linking both men's fighting skills to their sexual prowess.

Later that same day I asked Hamish why they had fought, as I assumed that they were friends:

*Hamish – Eh! girl tha is the point, like (laughing). Ye worry too much about nothing!*  
*Me – But it's not even like you were holding back at times there, when you were hitting him!*  
*Hamish – Eh! Yea Di yea think eh would insult one of my best mates like that (laughing). Hold back, you're fucking being right mad girl. Like eh said, ye think te much. Di ye nea gi it, like.*  
*Me an im we are good mates, ken and good mates will have a bit of fun! Playing about, like.*  
*Showing of sort 'ove. Tha is all it was ken, nu! Then again eh is always a bit of fun, like (laughing) even when it isn't, ken wha eh mean?*

While working in the field, I became inured to such interruptions and exchanges of verbal and physical violence. I especially found that verbal aggression and talking about actual violence formed a major part of the daily conversational repertoire.

As everyone said, it was just 'a bit of fun' but, at times, rather serious and violent fun. I personally found the external verbal aggression like the bitching, berating and baiting of the community centre staff more entertaining than internal fights as these exchanges were almost always highly insinuating, ironic, sour and sarcastic. Here is a good example:

*Diana – Di ye mind nea having a job like. Eh mean eh es well cool like we are both wiout a job, ken.*  
*'Iron balls' – What do you mean? I have a job you know that!*  
*Diana – Oh really! Eh dinna think ye would get paid for doing fuck all! Or maybe yer paid to be a pain like.*  
*'Iron balls' – Oh really funny!*  
*Diana – Nea girl! Eh mean Mrs Watson, eh was nea shitting ye, lik! Eh am being real on this, ken. Eh dinna ken tha ye did nothing here, like. Or maybe yer up to stuff in that office eh dinna ken about? Eh maybe tha is why ye wanna drag me in there all di time like.*  
*'Iron balls' – Well if you don't behave I guess I would have to give you a warning again!*  
*Diana – Oh mama! Eh knew ye fancied me like, but nea infront of me woman like. Di ye nea ken she is well jealous and all. If ye take me in yer office all the time di others will be affy suspicious like! Thinking yer got a favorite like.*  
*Lisa – Is tha eh fake hairdo like? Or di yer mum by yer a wig? Eh heard ye dinna take it aff when ye shagg like. Mind ye eh would 'nea ken ye never take me in there like Diana!*  
*Diana – Shut it! Or I will do it for ye!*  
*'Iron balls' – Remember no fighting here? I have warned you before!*  
*Diana – Oh girl ye ken ye want me!*

Sarcasm, irony, hints and insinuations were a large part of everyday conversational technique, even if they were just standing at the street corner and yelling to their fellow gang members or at someone else just passing by. The way that this would be interpreted depended largely on individual moods, and whether the individual was looking for a fight, trying to get in someone's face or just having good fun. Any and all of the above are actually seen locally as good fun - most of the time. This is illustrated perfectly by the following scene:

*Watty – Hey blondie! How about eh like! Eh would'nea mind ye giving me a once over! Ye ken ye wanna, like. Well how about it, eh will even let yer be on top bitch! He, he.*

Looking over his shoulder at his mates who are giggling.

*Watty – Why are ye nea answering bitch. Di ye think yer too fucking good for us like? Well common ye look like yer would be up for it. He, he.*

The girl walks up to him: right up to him, with her face as close to his as possible and with a totally straight and serious face answers:

*Girl – Di ye want a smack in the pus? Just git the fuck out of me face!*

*Watty – Eh have 10 mates with me! So yer better watch it or yer get a kicking!*

*Girl – Yer fucking sad mate, if yer need 10 mates to help ye fight me!*

The girl turns her back on him and walks away laughing as his friends are laughing with her. As she walks away she can hear his friends starting to ridicule him.

Later while sitting at our table I hear her retelling her story to Diana, who smiles right through it and then laughs as she says:

*Diana – Ye really got him all outmatched like. Good game girl. But Ye could've been really hurt, ken. Eh guess he was too surprised to ken wha to do, like. To sort ye out for squaring off and eh would nea have looked good for his mates neither. Eh bet he thought we were real good at fighting an all (laughing).*

*Girl – God! Eh never really thought he might fight me and all! He was just being too cheeky and I got mad.*

*Diana – (laughing and saying with ironic undertones) Yer plain crazy girl! Next time ye dinna look, stop or nothing. Well, God dinna even be cheeky back, ken. Just dinna try and sort out tha many without nea support like. Nea, yea tell them yeah wanna fight and make a time and we will all be there like. Yea should'nea keep all the fun for yerself like. Anyhow he seems well out of order, like needing mates to sort ye out. Well sad he does needs his head sorted, by a good kicking like. Giving us all a bad name like tha!*

*Laughingly the girl<sup>272</sup> said: eh was a buzz, like.*

There had been a lot of talk around the centre about Wendy, a girl who had attacked a 5 or 6-month pregnant girl. This resulted in a tidal wave of anger, which had been growing against her and her closest confidants. The general attitude in the community was that she was 'well out of order and needed sorting out'. However, due to her high skill with the shank<sup>273</sup> and because of her connections to a girl gang, she was in a position where no one could touch her: at least, not unless they also held the same fighting position and connections or if it was really personal; in which case, they had to get it sorted or they would lose face.

Jane and I were sitting talking about some gang fights over territory that had been going on in the neighbourhood over the last few weeks, when Lisa cockily strutted up to us and asked if she could join us. She said she was really looking for Diana, but thought she would wait there with us until Diana came back. Lisa was a hard fighter and a young one-parent with strong gang connections. She used to be a close mate of Karen, the girl who had been attacked by Wendy, and was prone to combine her rather agitated fighting style with the use of a broken bottle or shank. After having a cup of tea from our pot, she decided to tell us what had happened the night before at the local nightclub. She said that she had found Wendy alone, apart from her heroin-addict boyfriend, and had taken the opportunity in hand.

<sup>272</sup> The girl in the story was me, during the last few months of fieldwork.

<sup>273</sup> A shank is a Hardtown term for a knife or any sharp object used to stab someone.

*Lisa – Well wha should eh have done, like. If ye dinna ken how to sort them out or to gi back a least as good as ye get eh mean, who the fuck are ye? Well, ye is nea one of us! Ye canna let people talk to ye or treat ye any dam way they like! And ye ken eh was good mate wie Karen an all. So when eh got di chance eh kicked the fucking shit out of tha bitch, for shouting her mouth out about an all, like. She was so all about herself and where doing me head in. So eh fucking ba''ered her and eh bo''led her lad to. Two for the price of one, eh! (laughing).*

*Jane – eh ken eh was told tha fucking bitch had battered Karen. An when she was pregnant an all, like. Eh was well out of order.*

*Me – She hit someone when she was pregnant?*

*Jane – Eh ken! The fucking bitch was needing getting sorting out like. Good on yea Lisa, yer a fine lass. Tha bitch will end up dead one day if she dinna watch it like and nea a day to soon like (laughing). Tha wa she is going like she will git the eyes of di Hardman on her like and di will sort her out and nea one will help her like. Nea one like her, ken wha eh mean, like.*

After this we began to discuss and were given a blow-by-blow account of Lisa's fight.

During my first year of working within the Hardtown, the negative, mainstream state-moral discourse concentrated on the proclivity and immorality of single parents<sup>274</sup>. Towards the end of that year the GRcc, including the one-parent groups which met there every week, decided to have a party, with entertainment for the community, in one of the big halls near Dundee University. Groups working within the centre provided this entertainment, its theme being the community and its history.

That evening's entertainment strongly reminded me of many of the local stories or myths that were daily re-enacted in the discourse of the community centre. Although I did not expect much, I certainly did not expect some of the dramas played on that stage to touch me as much as they did. During one of the acts, I tried hard not to cry as I witnessed one of the girls re-enact the story<sup>275</sup> of a young woman who became pregnant and, due to poverty and lack of support<sup>276</sup>, was incarcerated in a local asylum and her child placed in care. The story told of a chance meeting 20 years later, when the mother had been let out from the asylum<sup>277</sup>. This girl and her friends began taunting the funny-looking madwoman who had been looking at them. The girl later returned to apologise and, after meeting several times, they became friends. The moment when they started telling each other about their lives was very moving, as both broke down and cried, realizing who they were and what they had lost. Next was a sketch on the strife-filled life of single mothers within the dubious protection of the Scottish Magdalena homes. After that sketch, a women's choir sang a number of local songs about similar stories, most of which did not have happy endings.

Over the next few days, the ongoing discussions at our table were heated, the general consensus being that the government's actions and mainstream rhetoric against single mothers were insane, immoral and violent. In the girls' minds, neither the government nor any other politician took any account of the poor in society.

<sup>274</sup> Most of this discourse concerned poor young women becoming pregnant out of wedlock and how this made them a burden on society.

<sup>275</sup> I later found that this was a story about the girl's own aunt.

<sup>276</sup> Her parents threw her out on the street because they could not afford to help her.

<sup>277</sup> Because of financial cutbacks, some of these women were let out but there are examples indicating that many continued to be incarcerated until they were in their 60s or 70s.



*Diana – eh is funny isn't it like. Di tell us we are all rubbish and dinna have nea moral and then they are di ones that do that to women. Fa what eh ask, fa what? Fa havin a bairn while yer a bairn yerself! Eh mean, what does tha make them? And eh es us di call bad, criminal, violent and without moral ken. Eh is us di think are crazy like. Us? Eh should be them put in di there fucking places, nea us! At least we have some kindness and heart wie each other, we are nea crazy only trying to do our best! And mind ye di will say it is for our own best like!*

During the years I spent in the Hardtown, it became clear that this exchange was only part of a continuous daily power-play<sup>278</sup> and the attitude of the frequenters was almost always verging on anger and irony, holding both overt and pronounced contextual threats of violence. At the start I was rather daunted by this daily aggressive display but, as I was allowed into and listened to their conversations, I found that much of this aggression came from a compulsion to defend themselves from what they felt was violence and attacks. This seemed to originate from a deep-seated anger and suspicion of external forces, such as the unemployment office.

*Darla – Yea would nea believe it. I went to the dole-office to sign on. Well eh dinna wanna be caught out until eh start my new job, like. And di actually asked me about my sex-life. Not just quietly, but loudly the woman asked me in front of the others in the queue how many I had sex with and if someone lived in my house. Of course eh went mental and refused to answer and they told me to like. I mean can you believe it!*

I have to admit that I was not surprised, as I had unfortunately heard several stories like this before. On one occasion, I even accompanied one lady to the unemployment office; she had been mistreated before and wanted someone to accompany her. I volunteered and can bear witness to the angry suspicion and dichotomised power-games displayed by state officials against my informant and other supplicants. It was embarrassing, frightening and enlightening. I found it easier to understand my informants' stories of mistreatment at the 'dole office', where anger, suspicion and verbal aggression were normal and individuals from poor areas were often forced to disclose intimate details of their sexual behaviour in front of complete strangers. I believe that this maltreatment is a direct result of the ingrained opinions<sup>279</sup>, implicit in mainstream, negative, state-moral discourse, about the presumed sexual conduct of one-parents, their immorality and of their defrauding the state and the taxpayer out of their money. As many of my informants so clearly stated: everything reverts to money and *them* attacking us and how we live!

I encountered Kara<sup>280</sup> during one of the meetings; she was livid and very upset that she had been treated in this way. I spent some time with her afterwards and she told me the whole story. Here is a translation of this story: *Well I had been told about this happening to others but I never thought it would be me. I did not realise that this was not an exception from the norm, but rather the normal treatment. I went in to sign on as usual and after standing in line for about an hour I got to the front and this lady with a sour face. She did not even look up at me, she just said 'so you're a single mum?' Do you live with someone, do you have boyfriends and how many do you have sex with. I was totally shocked that she would ask me this, but I was frightened to question her right to do so, but she had asked me in front of everyone else there and loud so they could all hear. I saw this sign above her which said you could ask for a*

<sup>278</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>279</sup> The morality of these ideas depended on interpreting the notions and reasons of the different sides in this conflict. Hardtowners did not consider receiving benefit and defrauding the benefit office as immoral.

<sup>280</sup> Kara was a very infrequent visitor to the one-parent group.



*private room in which you could discuss matters that you did not want others to hear and politely asked the woman if I could answer her questions in a private room. Her head jerked up and she glared at me and asked me loudly: 'what do you have to hide? I mean to ask for that you must be up to something'. I felt so embarrassed and she just continued to barrage me saying: 'you will not get a room, we need it for people with real problems, not for you. So answer my questions or I will have you leave the place or call security'. I was so frightened of her and of not getting my money. Well my daughter and I would not have survived without it! We depended on that money! So even though I was embarrassed I answered her questions in front of everyone else.*

In the face of such continual disempowering, it is perhaps understandable that local subterfuge and violation should be considered a valid response to offset the mainstream society's law or its rules, in a contextually powerful and empowering vocalization of self.

As Diana looked up after having done a deal under our table at the centre (she had been trading hash for speed and some money), I asked her if she wasn't worried about being found out and barred. I asked her because, although she was one of the most powerful women at the centre, she would be barred for such a clear violation of the centre's rules and would hate to miss her daily visits to the centre. She was very loquacious and the hub of the ongoing trading at our table: selling and buying drugs and/or stolen goods and planning crimes right under the noses of the staff and right in front of the security cameras.

*Diana – Eh am nea frightened of nea one! Eh is easier to plan it here cos nea one think we would di it cos it is so cheeky like. Di think we will follow di stupid rules di set fa us. Eh mean di com into our community and tell us wha to do. Who do di think di are? Eh mean in di end of di day they all leave and gi home to their safe little houses in their safe little worlds wi nea problems or money trouble and then think di can tell us wha to do! Di are plain stupid, like. Eh bet it really gets in their face that we are trading in here like. By breaking their rules! Well are nea our rules to begin wi! And if di catch us, well di will ban us for a few weeks and then eh will have to trade fa di front of di house. Nea big deal, like. And eh tell yea di will be punished if di will di that en al<sup>281</sup>. Di staff is easy to fool, di dinna even defend temselves good when we bitch at them. Di haven't got a fucking clue about nothing. So who do yea think is really in control of the centre like! Them or us! Fucking right, we are!*

Talking violence within the Hardtown was often drawn out to last for hours or even days at a time for the purpose of enjoyment; their own and their audience's. Skilful, violent, verbal orations against other frequenters or staff were admired and valued highly, especially when he/she was not *found out* and the *other* did not realise what he/she was doing. This was a common daily local mechanism of entertainment and merriment because anyone could get away with being contextually 'violent' towards outsiders in such a way that the centre's staff could not really sanction or punish him/her.

As this fragmented writing shows, most of the discussions and trading went on around the tables at the GRcc. It would therefore be useful to investigate verbal commonality around at least one of these tables within the community centre. As it had the highest hierarchical status in the centre, I chose to consider Diana's table.

<sup>281</sup> On one occasion when Diana was banned, a vendetta was taken out on the centre and its staff. For example, cups, food and toys were stolen, property was destroyed or defaced.

### **Violence and verbal communality around Diana's table**

I again apply Nigel Rapport's (1987) ideas to interpret levels of verbal communality around Diana's table at the GRcc<sup>282</sup>. Using some of my main informants' talking relationships, as structured in the map below, I employ Rapport's idea of 'furcating structure of inclusivity' (1987:184). I have done this to try to further consider the verbal communality in the daily discussions of violence: within the discourse, within the community centre and at our table.

The map shows there were a lot of discussions going on at our table, between varied and mixed groups of individuals with different hierarchical and network-related levels of intimacy and trust. It also shows that these talking relationships moved between different levels of communality on an ever-changing scale; moving gradually from the public sphere into more verbally intimate and private interactions and agreements.

The top circle indicates the structure of the group, which had most public interactions and contained the most common and extensive mix of individuals. It held the least amount of trust and was built on local verbal catchwords, phrases and norms. On the occasions when all of these individuals spent time sitting around Diana's table, the spread of topics did not vary much and neither did the level of intimacy, which remained at a very general level and never strayed into more intimate and personal areas which might compromise the individual locally. One of the main topics that always flowed around the table touched on the subject of how to deal with and negotiate the best deal out of the external forces, such as the social services and the police. I found that most frequenters of the community centre were pleased to share their experiences (good and bad) and gave advice on how they or someone they knew had managed to get '*a well bra deal ut of di social*'.

Other topics discussed by this extensive and varied mix of individuals around Diana's table usually involved the performance of violence. Most of these individuals actively took part in the daily displays of violence and they delighted in sharing with each other how much they enjoyed violence, how good they themselves were in fights, telling stories and gossiping about fights.

As the map clearly illustrates, I found that this large group split up into two main groups of social inclusivity and intimacy, in which the topics were more private, detailed and held increased levels of trust. These groups continued into smaller groups or one-to-one discussions, in which the levels of communality and intimacy increased even more. Both of the medium sized groups and the smaller splinter groups touched on intimate experiences and on verbal agreements, usually couched in some of the more public local catchphrases, such as 'drugs and sex are and should be fun' or 'violence is vital, fun and a means of togetherness'. These discussions were similar but also dissimilar and distinct in their different verbal opinions and local norms.

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<sup>282</sup> Rapport began by considering the initial stages of talking relationships and thus underlined the importance found in the structures and levels of these relationships.

# **Dealing with Authorities** (Sharing advice on ways to 'Gi more out of em')

Diana  
Jane  
Lisa  
John (Lisa's  
Boyfriend)  
Susan  
Dawn  
Zoe  
Sandra  
Hamish  
Me &  
Audiences

**Fighting - Verbal & Physical**  
i.e. telling tales of your own  
fights & gossiping about  
others

**Violence - The importance of  
how good you are at it & how  
much fun you have doing it**

## **The Use of Violence** **Powerplay - A part of daily life**

**Togetherness -  
Inclusion  
Who belongs &  
Who doesn't**

Diana  
Jane  
Zoe  
Susan  
Sandra  
Me &  
Audiences

**Police - Informing &  
Involvement**

**Drugs & Informal  
Market trading**  
(Ye do wha' ye need to ,  
to gi by! But ye do it be'er  
than others mind ye!)  
Using it to buy drugs

**Other Factions -  
How to trade  
co-operate & fight**

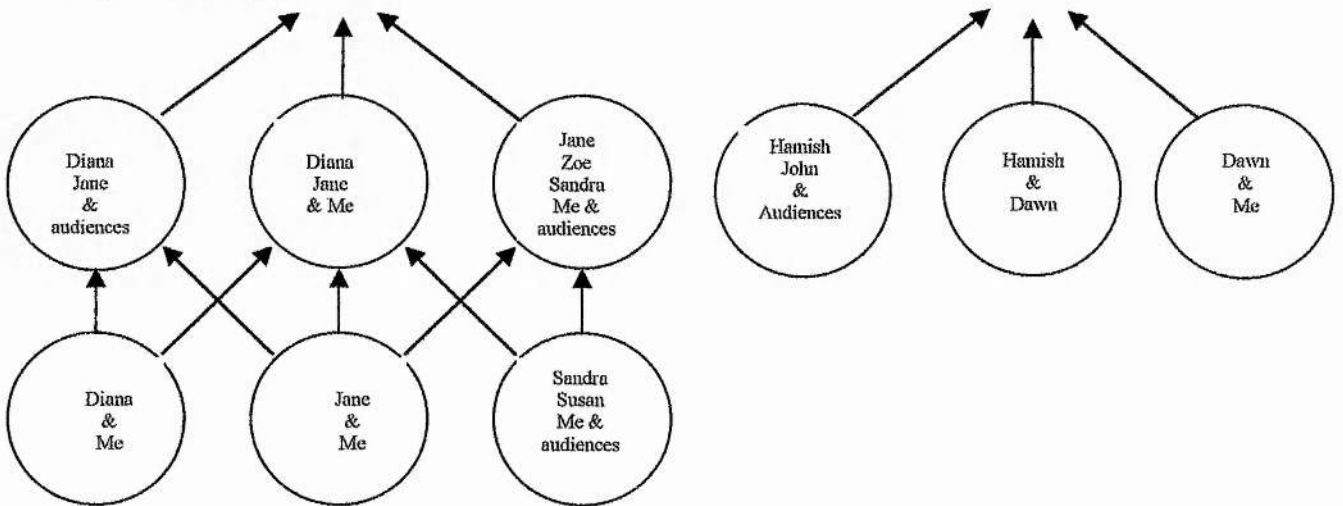
**Fighting & Partying  
(in gangs)**

**Taking Drugs &  
Kamikaze cocktails**

John  
Dawn  
Hamish  
Me &  
Audiences

**The importance of  
Blood-Kin**

**One night stands  
& Sex**



I now consider the discourse of verbal and physical violence in the Hardtown to investigate further the notions of enjoyment, togetherness and the intrinsic social importance of violence.

### **The ethos and discourse of verbal and physical violence in the Hardtown**

I suggested in Chapters 4 and 5 that the essence of the Hardtown's morality may be found in its overall fluidity, instability and ambiguity. Paradoxically, this morality functions, builds, maintains and breaches the dichotomised<sup>283</sup> and fragmented social internal and external boundaries. This moral ambiguity is found and negotiated in the daily exchanges, cooperation, support and power-play of the informal market and is related to an ethos of violence, working as a dual and paradoxical tool to keep communications, trading, exchanges and boundaries both open and separate (cf. Chapters 4 and 5).

John Friedmann (1992:22-23) stated that 'informal work' or an informal market, despite its constant harassment, its often invisibility to the state and its legal or illegal presence, through 'their persistence in the face of a hostile state, is an act of civil resistance'. This resistance acknowledged another development and an empowering economic choice in a continuous, disempowering exclusion and stigmatisation.

The performances of violence suggest the creation of an empowering and paradoxical notion of togetherness and division. This provided and placed a notion of moral legitimation to contextual notions of value and meaning on the moral ambiguity, instability and fluidity, embodied within a local notion of the exclusiveness of the excluded<sup>284</sup>.

Violence in its many forms also became a tool to construct individual, network and communal relationships, which were mainly unreliable and unstable. This instability was not necessarily or simply viewed as negative, as it was, at the same time, a necessary feature for the mobility and flexibility needed within informal market trading, cooperation and support.

### **The pleasure and entertainment of violence**

Following David Parkin (1996:xxxiv) and F.G Bailey (1996), I suggest that speaking and carrying out violence should be considered as a means of performing, communicating and enacting a communal, public and dramatically styled identity.

The Hardtown opposition by verbal<sup>285</sup> and physically violent power-play was further addressed by reference to Bailey's (1996:8) assumption that such a 'performance' accordingly 'symbolized resistance to hegemony'. This resistance addressed the intrinsic, contextual and

<sup>283</sup> My informants faced an internal and external dichotomy that embodied a continuous resistance, opposition and negotiation with both internal and external forces, institutions, agents, and individually perceived threats.

<sup>284</sup> I also found that violence was used contextually a means of communication and breached the dichotomised fragmented and unstable internal and external interactions within the Hardtown family and social networks as well as factions within the Hardtown informal market. It did this by the use of violent verbal baiting, bitching and berating or actual physical contact which, in different situations, could either signify a communication of power, ownership, willingness to barter or trade, a challenge, closeness, unity or dissent.

<sup>285</sup> This was a combination of talking about violence and talking violently. The importance placed contextually on the performance of doing and speaking violence within the community's social structure was suggested in the earlier sections of this chapter regarding: entertainment, gender, external-internal coercion, opposition etc.



local importance placed upon aspects of opposition against coercive, controlling, internal and external forces (and their negative moral exclusive discourse) in the performance of doing and speaking violence within the Hardtown.

This violent Hardtown discourse and the external representations are related to Judith Butler's (1993:3) investigation of the discursive limits of sex/gender, in which she suggested that 'performativity must be understood not as a singular of deliberate "act," but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names'. She offered an image of a subject composed 'by force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, "inside" the subject as its own founding repudiation'; as I found the mainstream repudiated violence as a representation of Hardtown defiance and identity (1993:3).

By continually referring to the 'noun *performance*' as something which 'carries with it a notion of publicity, something exhibited, something that is staged' (Bailey 1996:2), I suggest that Hardtown performance of violence assumed aspects of public and dramatically structured features that held significant, contextual values and meanings.

However, Butler (1993:12) had earlier suggested that her notion of performativity should be considered as a 'reiteration of a norm or a set of norms', proposing that 'to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present' it was only a means or tool to hide or 'dissimulate' that of which it was a repetition. I feel that this gives an over-complacent interpretation of the theatrical features in the performance of Hardtown violence. My observations suggest that the Hardtown style of performing violence often took on a formal and almost ritualistic dramatic, dichotomised game structure, in speech and in movement and in both their physical fights and their verbal baiting. As I observed these performances, I was often reminded of the dark humour and violence in the cinematographic style of Quentin Tarantino's films, such as *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction*, which are based on a dichotomised, ambiguous and unstable violent morality.

I have focused in this section on the aspects of entertainment, fun and humour of violence, primarily because of the everyday emphasis placed on these aspects in Hardtown discourse. This agrees with D. Parkin's (1996:introduction) discussion of the blurred boundaries in performing identity between off and on stage performances. He went on to add that although 'Apologists for violent films and television may deny this, but it is difficult to resist the conclusion that viewers may imitate at least the life-styles that go with such performances' (1996:xxii). I suggest that Hardtowners may also conceptualise this into an emotional and morally ambiguous dramatic and dichotomised performance of violence in, for example, the fight between Hamish and Kenny at the beginning of this chapter. I found many stylistic aspects that were closely connected with slapstick films, darkly humorous and violent films, such as Quentin Tarantino's, as well as martial arts films, all of which contain styles of fighting that are highly controlled and choreographed. As with many of these films, my informants' fights were often well matched and they traded kicks and punches, with fast changes between seriousness and laughter as they moved effortlessly from friendship to fighting and back to friendship again. This was reminiscent of something that was shaped as a performance but which also took on an air of unplanned easiness.

### Analysis of the first three fragmented scenes

The choice to focus on the performance of violence as a social act came from several sources. The first of these was Cohen's (1993:8) suggestion that anyone in an urban milieu should concentrate on the way 'people shape the city through their everyday resourcefulness' in the context of their own personal circumstances ascribing it with meanings and values. This was coupled with the importance and emphasis that Nigel Rapport's (1987:191) study placed on violence as socially intrinsic in the discourse of 'talking violence'.

In the Hardtown discourse of violence, I found that an importance and emphasis was placed on both words and actions and particularly on the expectation of sudden and explosive acts of violence. Most of my Hardtown informants emphasised the importance of interaction: *'all are in on eh and love it and ken wha is going on. Eh makes us, us! Eh can make ye into anything while ye also can share it wi everyone!* It seems to me that this demonstrates and embodies a collective performance of violence, which also agrees with Rapport's (1987:192) suggestion that studies of 'doing violence, words and actions must (or can) be treated as a unity'.

With reference to the words and expressions that often accompanied my informants' performances of violence, I found some similarities with Laurie Taylor's (1984) study of the criminal London underworld. Diana, Hamish, Darla and most of my other informants in the community centre all used very similar and vital, value-based terminology to that used by Taylor's informants, the most common of which was of someone being 'out of order' (ibid: 148-57). This locally seemed to express and was primarily used by most informants to define immoral behaviour against the Hardtown rules of moral conduct, particularly those associated with the informal market. However, I did find some differences with the opinions and terminology used by my informants and Taylor's. On the whole, I did not find the Hardtown gossip, tales or violent actions associated with someone being 'out of order' to be completely devoid of moral colouring.

The violent scenes at the start of the chapter described fragments of the discourse of performing violence encountered within my fieldwork in the community centre. It created an image of the Hardtown as a community where informant communication of identity, values and meanings was highly infused with an emphasis on notions and representation of violence, linked to the legitimisation of a fluid and fragmented moral discourse. When I (tentatively) questioned some of my Hardtown informants on the importance and role of violence<sup>286</sup> in the community, most agreed with this assessment. Many also emphasised that I should not forget the joy and entertainment that this shared and interactive performance brought into their daily lives.

To highlight some of the aspects of violence that my Hardtown informants themselves considered important and often treated as a vital or necessary part of local knowledge, I list the seven most common and highly valued aspects of the joy and entertainment of violence. I

<sup>286</sup> I suggest that the representations of violence probably originated from the stark negative connotations held by mainstream notions but soon became an intrinsic sign of contextual opposition and transformation in Hardtown. It recreated these previously negative, mainstream notions into a local positive societal foundation on which they reconstructed knowledge and gave new meaning to the local marginal individuals' daily lives, identities and values. This created a space where the marginal individuals and factions, with fragmented and unstable identities and affiliations, could come together to perform a shared communal daily ritual of talking and doing violence in the public and communal locality of the GRcc.

found several examples of each of these aspects used and discussed within daily Hardtown discourse, partly illustrated with the help of the above fragmented scenes.

1. **Violence (speaking or doing) as a game or (ritual and dramatic) performance** – my Hardtown informants considered speaking and doing violence as a pleasurable and entertaining dramatic and ritual game and as a performance of identity, based on the exclusivity of the excluded. It was by no means merely considered as a 'keyword' entering everyday social discussions (Raymond Williams 1983:329-31). Most of my informants agreed that the Hardtown performance of violence was a risky game that could either take on a physical or verbal form or both. However, I should like to add that the use of one form of violence was not necessarily followed or hindered by the other. I suggest that the Hardtown performance and use of violence was possibly conceptualised as a game to incorporate it into a daily dichotomised legitimisation, by using and constructing it as a contextual means of empowerment. This effectively put the concept and individuals on a daily ritual of trials, which could improve or heighten individual networks and communal identity, status, strength, prowess and cooperation. One of the most commonly used and contextually valued performances of violence for entertainment and pleasure was verbal fighting. This typically involved the use of mind-games in the shape of sarcastic baiting, bitching and berating between two or more individuals. These verbal and physical games were part of the daily internal and external dichotomised power-play fragmenting the community. It was professed to be entertaining and pleasurable, both for the participants involved in doing and speaking violence as well as for the audience, who interacted to a certain degree. In the first of my fragmented scenes, I found that speaking and doing violence took the form of a dramatic game or performance which, through the shared knowledge of friendship and closeness, further emphasised the togetherness and exclusiveness of the participants. The second scene illustrated a more ironic game played to entertain an audience of strangers and facilitate a measure of security and distance.
2. **Aggression** – was also contextually conceptualised as an entertaining and pleasurable social feature, because of its links to exercising or opposing individual, network and communal hierarchies of fear, power, control and subjugation. Paradoxically, it also suggested a contextual notion of losing control and so introduced a new variable into the contextual game of violence. This extra variable was considered as enhancing the game and rendering it more exciting, entertaining, fluid and pleasurable, because of this extra edge of the unknown. Scenes one and two both illustrated different ways of using aggression to create entertainment and joy by simulating sudden loss of control. I also found that the audience interacted in the violence to different degrees by placing bets on which individual would place the hardest hit or by using verbal violence in the form of insulting and baiting to try to confuse and incite both combatants, as well as the other individuals watching, to lose their tempers (losing control meant losing face unless it is a deliberate ploy).
3. **Identity - Togetherness and Closeness** – related to the doing or speaking of violence as a contextual example and concept of the performance of factional (group, gang or network) and communal identity, togetherness and closeness. It also entertained and gave pleasure. In other words, when friends contextually spoke and were physically violent to each other, it was a means of expressing, constructing and maintaining their identity of togetherness and closeness, as well as entertainment. I found that the local informal market networks also considered the performance of violence as a means of



enacting and confirming their identity. In this case, it was interrelated to the Hardtown fragmented, fluid and dichotomised individual and communal notions of relatedness, contextual status, expressions of power and closeness. Paradoxically, the local performance of violence was used to build and maintain bridges as well as to separate and fragment the dichotomised factions through their daily power-plays. This upheld cooperation, support and trading and promoted violence as a contextual notion and representation of empowerment against outside forces. Hanmerz's (1980:255-61) programmatic terms, coupled with Amit-Talai's (1989), pointed the way for my considering social identities within the urban environment. They both suggested that, when encapsulated in one or more social worlds 'with varying possible degrees of segregation or integration between them', these should be expressed in terms of 'voluntary' participation (Rapport and Overing 2000:378). On this basis, I suggest that my local Hardtown informants (in varied degrees) would voluntarily consider the performance of violence and the informal market as ways of actively 'acquiring the resources necessary for the development and expression of their social identities' among their fragmented lives and social worlds (ibid: 378). In fact, I found that the contextual performance of violence as entertainment and a pleasurable conceptualisation of identity, closeness or friendship permeated most areas of the community. More specifically, I found that the Hardtown individuals, groups and gangs used these performances of violence as an enjoyable notion and representation of empowerment, identity and closeness as well as togetherness. This is illustrated for example by the fittingly fragmented scenes above. In scene two, Diana complained to the girl involved in the altercation that she should have waited and let the situation develop or planned to have it develop into a physical fight. I suggest that Diana's proposed confrontation, which would have included all in her fighting network, would have provided them with a means of entertainment and an opportunity for feeling closeness, togetherness and friendship.

4. ***Laughter*** – was used in most contextual performances of doing or speaking violence. It was locally viewed as a conceptualisation and indication of pleasure, enjoyment, irony and sarcasm, as well as fear. For my informants, laughter was a joint emotional response of shared entertainment and pleasure: for example, two friends recalling the private memories of a good fight. It might also be a defiant laugh in the face of an enemy, either to instil fear, show no indication of fear or to goad the other individual. It was also used to punctuate and emphasise a sarcastic or ironic tone or stylistic way of phrasing him/herself, such as laughing while telling someone what a good fighter he/she was. It was also seen as a way of creating either closeness or distance between combatants, by inferring that the other was not worth fighting: indicating that he/she did not take the other combatant seriously or that he/she was not fully present and thus had removed and separated him/herself from the altercation. It might also be a sign of pain or not wanting to show pain, the inference being that pain was both entertaining and pleasurable. In this way, combatants tried to distance themselves from the pain and the combat as well as to try to frighten the other participant. The continuous use of laughter in the above scenes underlines the important part it played in the performance of Hardtown violence.
6. ***Irony and sarcasm*** – was used daily by the Hardtown informants while doing and/or speaking violence. Rapport and Overing (2000:211) surmise that 'irony can be understood to represent a certain cognitive detachment from the world as it is or as it seems, and an imagining of its infinite possible otherness'. I found that the irony used



and described in the fragmented images of performing violence above was paradoxically and intrinsically used for control/coercion, inclusion/exclusion and the simultaneous pleasure of the individuals involved in this verbal or physical dichotomised game. I ascertained that it also seemed to relate to any audience present, either during the exchange itself or to which it was later retold. Stylistically, the local mind-games were usually oriented towards personal or network weaknesses, including physical, verbal, mental, criminal, sexual lack of prowess and inadequacy. Through the contextual behaviour of my informants, I found that individuals and networks obtained a degree of status by 'scoring points' through the use of irony and sarcasm in their verbal violence against others. This was particularly valued for the entertainment and pleasure it offered: the skilful use of ironic or sarcastic violent oration indicated a sharp mind, which could be used for mind-games and while fighting, to agitate and confuse the individuals fought. The skilful use of irony and verbal violence to manipulate enemies and friends alike was contextually valued highly and a necessity for any individual aspiring to become a Hardman. Physical prowess and proficiency were deemed inadequate if they were not matched by equal verbal prowess: or, as one of my informants expressed it; *nea one became a fucking Hardman only by he's muscles*.

The Hardtown use of sarcasm and irony was not only applied in verbal performances, but also highly coloured the body and facial language of the combatants. A movement of hand, a sneer, a lifted eyebrow, or a stance might easily be considered, interpreted and treated as an ironic or sarcastic attack on or against someone's honour or respect. To win such a verbal fight was contextually considered to hold the same meaning and value as a good physical fight and was equally retold in detail and bragged about. It was used within dichotomised fighting between internal factions as well as between internal and external forces. I found that some of these mind games and verbal fights could last for hours and sometimes days at a time, the longer ones usually maintained solely for the purpose of audience enjoyment. Among frequenters of the community centre, skilful verbal dichotomised violent orations against outsiders<sup>287</sup>, such as the staff at the community centre were admired and valued highly. They used these orations as a means of revaluation and opposition against these others and were delighted when the outsiders (especially the community centre staff) neither realised what their local conduct inferred or embodied. This is a good example of the theory of 'ironic imagining', famously referred to by Nietzsche as a 'revaluation of all values' (Rapport and Overing 2000:211-12). The use of irony and sarcasm against community centre staff was a common daily local mechanism for entertainment and merriment. This supplied my Hardtown informants with a means of being contextually violent, disrespectful and *out of order* towards such outsiders in a manner for which they could not readily be sanctioned or punished. By using this form of violence, I suggest they developed and transformed local notions of dichotomised opposition to express 'the tense truth of ambiguity' that I found with most fragments of Hardtown life (Chambers 1994:98, cited in Rapport and Overing 2000:212). The frequenter's use of irony and sarcasm during dichotomised verbal violence, especially against 'outsiders', seemed to express and provide an amount of contextual, individual and communal empowerment. Irony and sarcasm were used to a degree throughout all of my fragmented scenes.

6. ***The Buzz or High*** – was the physical and emotional pleasure and joy felt while doing or speaking violence, or both. I found that my Hardtown informants viewed this as the

<sup>287</sup> This valued verbal violence is also performed by the GRcc frequenters against those from other factions.

peak of the individual physical and emotional pleasure and enjoyment from violence. Many considered that obtaining such a *buzz* was a highly valued contextual means of entertainment and pleasure, as well as way of dispelling the daily toll of boredom. It was also connected to the informal market through the *buzz* obtained by thieving. On a more intimate and personal level, my informants often compared it to the *buzz* they felt when they had sex. For example, consider Hamish's response to the question of why he did not pull his punches with his friend: Hamish and Kenny both received entertainment, pleasure, status, respect and honour as well as an *buzz* from the verbal and physical violence itself – but also from the pain...

7. ***Fear and Pain*** – were often linked to the *buzz* in the local notion of entertainment and pleasure. My informants often discussed this paradox during gossip about violence or striving to obtain a *buzz*. In their opinions, feeling and causing both fear and pain were considered to lend the contextually valued, emotional and physical reward of pleasure and entertainment. The behaviour and expressions of my informants suggested that, on a purely physical level, being on the receiving end of fear and pain brought a rush of adrenalin and as pleasurable a high as if they caused fear and pain in others. The local status and other such gains obtained by someone causing or inspiring fear were likewise described and valued as contextual notions and representations of pleasure and entertainment. The contextual importance of pain, violence and fighting held such a significant place within the Hardtown community that pain was referred to as pleasurable, whether or not it was in connection with doing or speaking physical violence or, indeed, sexual violence. I was initially introduced to Hardtown contextual notions and representations of violence through community centre gossip and their very graphic descriptions of the pleasurable, entertaining and enjoyable side of pain, physical punishments and dichotomized power-play between sexual partners. This was often discussed around our table at the community centre. *Darla – di ye ken eh dinna mind the pain at times neither! Eh like it! Ken wha eh mean like. Ye ken what eh am into during the weekends. Eh guess I have become rather used to it all and now it is exciting and makes me feel good like. Well if he is good at it, that is, he he. Eh is nea just the pain or the sex an all tha is tha exciting, ken. Eh is the game, tha makes it such a rush! Will eh win or will him.* Such conversations usually started or ended with a listing of all the drugs that had been consumed that day or over the last few weekends.

As these seven contextual aspects of entertainment and pleasure demonstrate, violence seemed to permeate most aspects of the Hardtown social structure: friendships, relatedness, closeness, trading, exchanges, respect, obligation, cooperation, support, values and meanings.

After an extensive review of my research material, I found no suggestion or evidence for any simplistic, clear-cut or systematic pattern in the structure and/or escalation of crime and violence in the Hardtown.

Instead, my research suggested that crime and/or violence could originate in several ways and graduate or escalate by various routes, which either worked in parallel or existed as separate functions. Violence, criminal pursuits and use of legal and illegal substances were locally endemic and there was no clear-cut evidence to suggest that participation in one of these naturally followed or progressed to the next level<sup>288</sup>.

<sup>288</sup> During my research, I amassed rich and bountiful data under three main categories: (1) Violence (2) Drug use (3) Stealing. I suggest that any future study of escalation should be undertaken within each of these categories:

To gain further insight into the structure of the local performance of violence, the next section considers the local rules of engagement.

### **Rules of engagement**

The behaviour of some of my informants suggested that violence was perpetrated and performed locally, especially against outside forces, because they felt they needed to, because they wanted to and because they could<sup>289</sup>.

That violence could start or break out without warning was true. However, it did not follow that violence had no repercussions: Hardtown sanctions in response to different acts of spontaneous or long-planned violence were frequently both harsh and unforgiving. The most common examples of repercussions and sanctions were reprisal and avenging assaults, which attacked individuals and their property. It was also possible but very rare for someone to buy his/her way out of a problem or difficult situation using money, territory or luxury goods<sup>290</sup>. The reason for its limited use was that it would inevitably result in loss of respect and status-position and leave the individual open to the possibility of murder. The weaker the individual was thought to be, the lower he/she would be within local hierarchy, the easier it would be for others to take him/her out and the harder he/she would need to strike to regain status.

Given the severity of the repercussions if someone miscalculated the time, occasion and, in particular, the person he/she was violent towards, I feel it necessary to outline the notions and the rules of engagement tacitly understood by everyone in Hardtown.

### **The general Hardtown rules of violence**

The premier rule was that violence directed against children (unless by another child), the elderly, pregnant women or disabled individuals and certain types of domestic violence were conceptualised as out of order and therefore deemed to be immoral. Infringement of any of these precepts resulted in a loss of status and reputation, not only affecting the individual perpetrating the attack but also, by extension, his/her family and social networks<sup>291</sup>.

Paradoxically, domestic abuse also functioned in some ways and in some factions as a means of ascribing how hard or *bad* a man or a woman was or how well they controlled their own partner. It was important to hold the power or control a relationship within the Hardtown, whether the partner was of the same or opposite sex. If an individual felt that his/her power or status was under threat, he/she considered that it was morally right to reclaim the balance in the

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viewing and mapping them as separate entities before any attempt is made to interrelate them systematically in an overarching construction (cf. Appendix 8).

<sup>289</sup> While I was aware of some of the many reasons given by the Hardtowners for the level of local violence, I became more interested in their behaviour and expressions of the pleasure and power that the performance of spoken and physical violence bestowed.

<sup>290</sup> This was viewed as the coward's way out.

<sup>291</sup> I should like to add that the local aspect or notion of weakness was in many ways interpreted as inferiority. As the behaviour of my informants and the opinions they emphasised during discussions suggested, the attacking of defenceless individuals such as strangers and outsiders to the community, held no negative connotations. While most claimed that they would not willingly attack outsiders in the categories mentioned in the above rules, a few admitted that an attack might be permissible if their liberty or financial lives were at stake.



relationship. On a very few occasions, physical force was contextually allowed, but only in response to a stark insult or crime perpetrated against the individual or his/her status. Some relationships had what might be called an equal division of power and status or where the difference between the partners seemed minuscule (cf. domestic abuse on p184).

It should be added that contextually someone would gain or lose respect and honour, depending on whether he/she could give or take a beating.

For anyone to ask questions<sup>292</sup> about, comment on or even compliment the Hardman's performance of violence to an individual belonging to the Hardman's network was considered particularly stupid. Such behaviour was locally considered as a means of trying to obtain facts, which might be used to inform<sup>293</sup> against this individual to external or internal forces. Any individual behaving in this manner would be taking a great risk.

From my informants' stories, some of the breaches of Hardtown norms and morality were accredited either to peer group pressure, external pressure or to the influence of illegal and legal substances, such as drugs and alcohol. Therefore the next section further elucidates violence and its links to substances in the Hardtown.

### **Legal and illegal substances used and abused within the Hardtown community**

Many if not most of the people who frequented our table at the GRcc were dependent to different degrees on several kinds of chronically prescribed medication. They often drank alcohol (*carry-outs*) in the evenings and had a dependency on certain illegal substances, when available<sup>294</sup>, perhaps to try to dispel the cold touch of everyday boredom, poverty, depression and the stress of unstable relationships, as well as personal feeling of unhappiness. These were the most usual reasons given by my informants for their use of legal and illegal drugs and medication. Others simply stated that they used drugs as they were readily offered and easily found. I found that none of my main informants' everyday lives were entirely free from alcohol or their dependency on prescribed medication or illegal substances (cf. Chapter 3).

This everyday dependency at times led to street brawls, gang fights and often resulted in shouting matches of verbal violence: something for which there was also much evidence throughout Dundee's historical records (cf. Chapter 1).

All of my informants drank alcohol to a greater or lesser extent but it often seemed to be more of a socially shared substance than most of the other substances used on a day-to-day basis. It was mostly used for social gatherings, either in the local pub or for *carry-outs*. I also found that alcohol and hashish were the main facilitators of shared social communications by

<sup>292</sup> Listening to the discussions around Diana's table, I found that questions or comments relating to any illegal act, particularly the planning of larger robberies or murders, should not be attempted until and unless the matter was first raised by the perpetrator or by a member of his family or social network and provided the questioner was also a member of this family or social network. This was a rule of local behaviour that every Hardtownner learned at an early age and would be wise to follow, especially in situations where the individual performing the violence was positioned substantially higher on the hierarchical scale. Even within family and social networks, extreme caution is recommended (cf. Chapters 4 and 5).

<sup>293</sup> See Chapters 4 and 5.

<sup>294</sup> I do not claim that all Hardtownners are dependent on alcohol, illegal substances or medication, but merely that most of the individuals with whom I worked, during my fieldwork did frequently, if not daily, make use of such substances.



creating a state of relaxation and a limited togetherness, which nevertheless often turned into performances of verbal violence.

On this basis, I suggest that alcohol contextually functioned as a means and facilitator of temporary togetherness, particularly when Hardtowners tried to achieve a certain limited degree of trust during exchanges or trading within the informal market. It helped those involved to place temporary trust in each other not to push the boundaries of contextually acceptable behaviour into the unacceptable performance of violence, at least for the duration of the exchange. On the other hand, it should not be taken too far, as one of my informant's explained: *'Ye dinna ha a carry-out and gi drunk wi someone ye canna or wanna trust, like! But if ye do eh might be dangerous like as they might off you there and then, when yer relaxed. Or ye might relax to much and let yer gob go. So drinking wie them yer together, fa now like.'*

There has been varied discussion on the effect alcohol has on human behaviour, some linking it to violence, and others responding by showing connections to peaceful communions (see David Riches 1986:18, MacAndrew and Edgerton 1970 etc.) As I found that much of the daily Hardtown performance of violence also occurred without direct connection to alcohol, I partly agree with David Riche's (1977, 1986) suggestion that:

*"among those social events for which alcohol happens to be an intrinsic part, violent behaviour (supposing it occurs) is learned behaviour. And this certainly fits with two vital observations: first, very often in human social settings where violence is performed, alcohol is not being consumed; second, alcohol consumption can be connected with entirely peaceable behaviour"*  
(Riches 1986:18)

At the same time I should like to stress that the combination of the two; alcohol and violence, often affected the structure of violence performed in the Hardtown. Some locals did associate alcohol with the performance of violence, particularly if the performance seemed uncontrolled and not skilfully mastered. Hardtowners were concerned about appearances and considered such performances as undignified and partly juvenile<sup>295</sup>. If two individuals were enemies or in temporary cooperation, both were careful not to drink to excess as inebriation could lead to a loss of control, which could in certain situations negatively affect them or their network's status. This would in turn result in a certain loss of respect within the community and within the informal market's hierarchy. Paradoxically and in other situations, a loss of control or a person going berserk could be viewed as a valuable commodity in a performance of violence.

Many of my informants felt that the only circumstances when the mixing of alcohol with violence would not be considered as improper or juvenile conduct would be outside the community, for example, frequenting a nightclub.

### **Alcohol, insubordination and empowerment**

Turning now to the economic relationships with external forces, such as my Hardtown informants' dependency on the giro-wage, I found that the use of alcohol and drugs, or to a performance suggesting the use of them, seemed to facilitate or 'accommodate such effective subordination with expressions of insubordination' (Riches 1986:20). My informants claimed

<sup>295</sup> The younger generation gangs often mixed the use of alcohol and violence, while 'hanging out'. This often resulted in inter- or intra-gang fighting, as tempers would flare or 'because it was fun'. This was contextually viewed as a pursuit of the young and yet not fully adult individuals.

that, when they were threatened with the loss of social benefits for intimidating the staff or fighting in the benefits office, perhaps under the influence of alcohol or drugs, many blamed the situation and their behaviour on the drink or drugs<sup>296</sup>. In many cases when this occurred, the individuals did not receive any direct, financial sanctions. They were instead referred to the local Health centre and the GP, who would prescribe (further) medication, such as Valium to help control their aggression unsuitable behaviour and supposed depression.

On this basis, I suggest that some Hardtowners used the aggression and the influence of alcohol and drugs in the social security office as a means of insubordination and personal empowerment, at little or no risk to themselves. This lent them power, by obfuscating the disempowering control and coercion otherwise held by these agents of external forces and the state, through their daily dependence on giro-wage. For example, I knew many individuals from the community centre who went to the social services office, either on drugs or having consumed alcohol, to show their disrespect and anger towards the institution, the individuals working there and what they stood for. In effect, they used the drugs and alcohol as a veil to hide the insubordination and anger<sup>297</sup>, which could not otherwise be directly displayed or performed within the structured environment found outside the community.

Butler (1997:11) stated that power '*exerted on a subject, subjection is nevertheless a power assumed by the subject, an assumption that constitutes the instrument of that subject's becoming*'. Butler's continued theory on power 'Subjection/Subordination' suggested that the Hardtown use of violence and alcohol, as appropriated tools of local power, might perhaps lead to 'involve an alteration of power such that the power assumed or appropriated works against the power that made that assumption possible' (ibid: 13). It still ambivalently 'tied to those conditions' and embodied the ambivalence that also shaped and constructed the style of the local and external Hardtown interactions and power plays (ibid: 13). Thus I agree that this ambivalence is intrinsic within the local Hardtown social fabric and is 'a resistance that is really a recuperation of power' as well as 'a recuperation that is really a resistance' as this simultaneous ambivalence embodies the tie of agency (ibid: 13). This also suggests that my informants' behaviour implies that it is not certain that they will ever be, or are likely to become, chained to these forms.

The next section further considers the Hardtown informants' use of trickery and fraud.

### **Trickster- the confidence man**

Many conversations, stories and myths exchanged daily around Diana's table focused on the issue of contextual empowerment, through the local disempowering of external forces and their agents<sup>298</sup>. These exchanges, which included oppositional notions and representations of their morality, immorality and violence, together with examples of their negotiations in the dichotomised power game, seemed to argue that they strengthened their own position, while they simultaneously weakened the external 'others'. They stressed that much of this sense of empowerment came from the fact that they were fully aware of what they were doing at all times, irrespective of whether these external 'others', often referred to by my informants as 'stupid cowards', fully realised what was happening.

<sup>296</sup> This corresponds in part to the illustrations found in Riches (1977, 1986) and Paine (1971).

<sup>297</sup> Some admitted that, under the guise of the drugs and alcohol, they threatened and struck *purposefully* against the subjugating social service staff, community centre staff, doctors and other such agents of the external forces.

<sup>298</sup> Illustrated in the above fragmented writing.

They often described the pleasure they received from being verbal violent towards these 'outsiders' as profuse and seemingly empowering, both individually and as part of a communal notion of togetherness. Playing the *trickster* or aggressive, threatening malcontent was seen as a way of extorting fun, entertainment and pleasure from situations, which would otherwise be embarrassing and disempowering. Stealing and cheating on benefits were seen as ways of fighting back and taking power from the 'others', who held the coercive promise of benefit money over them, like a sword of Damocles, and believed they were in control. Each of my informants contributed to these discussions by re-enacting, retelling and talking about their favourite stories and myths, punctuated with much verbal violence.

R. Bauman (1986) confirmed the contextual importance of local stories and everyday myths by considering Watson and Potter's (1962) idea that:

*... "social interaction gives form to the image of self and the image of the other; it gives validity and continuity to the identifications which are the source of an individual's self-esteem"*  
(1962:246 cited in Bauman 1986:21).

Many of my informants expressed their feelings of low self-esteem during one-to-one discussions, usually in connection with a feeling of exclusion from normative society and all the rights they assumed were offered to the 'others'. These feelings were often infused with a strong sense of lack of control, disempowerment and an absence of hope for the future. John Friedmann (1992:10) considered that the wilful exclusion of someone from certain rights<sup>299</sup> was 'a kind of violence on the person excluded'. I suggest that the daily re-enactment of everyday myths, stories and violence represented part of the local negotiation, negation and manipulation of their feelings of just such exclusion, brought about by coercion and control<sup>300</sup>. I also suggest that local groups and individuals were trying to reach a degree of local control and overview in the attempt to regain contextual equality of such rights as they assumed were found within mainstream society. Using their own means and through their own values, they have visualised and tried to claim a degree of empowerment.

The last three of the fragmented scenes at the start of this chapter can be considered as examples of my informants' myths and stories of symbolic yet everyday concerns, illustrating past, present and future violence used between factions within the community or by external others against the community.

In a sense, my informants around Diana's table were keeping the history of Hardtown injustice alive: not only remembering but re-enacting memorable events and injustices, if not daily, at least on special occasions. As each story or myth was remembered and re-enacted by an individual or group, the audience were able to share collectively in the regeneration of their opposing identity and self-esteem: warning them of past, present and (likely) future injustices and reminding them not to trust or take anything or anyone for granted.

<sup>299</sup> Article 25.1 stated 'Everyone has the right to a standard of living for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age, or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control!' (Friedmann 1992:100). I suggest that this should also include the right to be treated with dignity and respect, particularly by the state of which the individual is a part. In an ideal world, no state should exclude or marginalize any individual, group or community within that state.

<sup>300</sup> By extension, it can also manipulate their disempowerment into a local notion of power.



A number of sources have stressed the importance of myth and story staging in generating a communal political identity. For example, Parkin (1984:349) considered the individual speaker's 'creativity' and resourcefulness when reciting myths and stories, while Leach (1954) acclaimed the existence of a subtle and fragile equilibrium between the performatory and innovative and the functional and confirmatory, as well as considering them both as political.

Parkin (1984) suggested that Sapir's use of the 'internal metaphor', which was 'felt' rather than 'thought' took on a 'form of hidden persuasion' and would constitute a 'common feature of hortatory political address' (1984:359)<sup>301</sup>. Such hidden and shared persuasion was undoubtedly a feature of the re-enactment of Hardtown myths and each might therefore be considered as a political act. Parkin underlined (for me) the connection between Hardtown ambivalence and sense of identity and he also placed emphasis on the use of 'professional jargon' (for example as used by social security staff), which 'renders powerless the ordinary language of the uninformed' (1984:360). My Hardtown informants claimed that they fought against this sense of being powerless and lacking identity on a daily basis in their verbal battles with community centre staff, using all the ambivalent and violent verbal discourse available to them within their own dichotomised environment.

R. Bauman (1986) proposed that the stories, myths and lies told by the coon hunters he encountered:

*... "are at base about the construction and negotiation of personal identity. In them, sociable narratives are a vehicle for the encoding and presentation of information about oneself in order to construct a personal and social image"* (Bauman 1962:246 cited in Bauman 1986:21).

Consider the following contextual Hardtown forms: their story and myth re-enactment (for self-identification and self-esteem), their formulaic use of irony (for displacement) and their descriptions of outside forces as mere objects or idiots (to dehumanise). Taken together, the Hardtowners have developed their own mores, style and language, reminiscent of the style used by the 'informed' social service staff to dehumanise *them*. This effectively reduced their external world to a mirage, without any emotions or humanising factors and described merely as impersonal institutions. They parodied the mores, style and language of these 'outsiders' in myths and stories of their sense of local injustice but introduced their own specialities: violent indignation and irony. This enabled them to describe and re-enact the compartmentalization and the disempowering treatment received in the past and currently, in a distorted burlesque of, for example, social security staff. Paradoxically, this showed that my informants were more than ready to use a style set by others to facilitate *their* disempowerment or turn the tables on these same 'others'.

Combined with my earlier suggestion of the contextual performance of violence as a means of local empowerment, the performance of myth re-enactment created an overarching construction of shared self-esteem, which engendered togetherness and local power in the face of a daily disempowerment. For example, consider the communal daily ritual of these socio-economically marginal individuals<sup>302</sup> meeting in the shared communal locality of the Grcc to

<sup>301</sup> Parkin poses that 'Bailey's initial study of committees' considered the emotive, formal rules within 'political speech-making' and its connections to 'analogical' power (Bailey 1965:8 & 15 cited in Parkin 1984:346 & 356). Parkin suggested that much of it was viewed 'as exchanges, a feature to which Comaroff' (1975 cited in Parkin 1984:353) and many others referred (see also Comaroff 1985).

<sup>302</sup> Many of these individuals had fragmented and unstable notions of identity and affiliations.



stage their performances of talking violence<sup>303</sup>. As previous chapters have shown, this might be seen as a facilitation and means through which they built, breached and maintained their contextual relationships, which were, in many cases, unreliable, ambiguous and unstable.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the local, Hardtown sense of morality was a near-inversion of mainstream concepts of morality. While many of my informants only had a vague notion of the social knowledge conceptualised within mainstream society, they still rejected it and built their own stereotypical version in their collective imaginations<sup>304</sup>. It was this stereotype they attacked in their everyday performances of myth re-enactment and violence and their participation in the local informal market. By the same token, the 'others' they met daily only had a vague, stereotypical notion of the average Hardtownner.

I also suggest that Hardtownners did not necessarily view this often-encountered local instability and ambiguity<sup>305</sup> as having negative connotations or effects. Many of my informants stressed the useful, if not necessary, contribution of instability and ambiguity in sustaining the support and cooperation of their local trading networks within the highly competitive informal economy. In this case, the instability and ambiguity helped to provide the essential mobility and adaptability needed to succeed in the informal market trading and within the Hardtown's dichotomised fragmented networks.

Comparing the positive notions of violence within the Hardtown community against the starkly negative connotations held by mainstream society, I suggest that any mainstream attempt to actively target Hardtown violence would be counterproductive. It would probably enhance the local notions of mainstream negative representations and lead to a recreation or re-appropriation of some of these notions into a contextually positive societal base, on which Hardtownners could reconstruct a local notion of resistance, empowerment and exclusivity of the excluded. This example demonstrates how contextual negative opinion might be turned into a positive attribute: a local speciality, an important part of the Hardtown hierarchy and a component of the daily discourse and story telling in the community centre.

Continuing with the transformation of mainstream notions into local representations, I now consider the importance of lying and trickery.

<sup>303</sup> Such as myths, stories and violent re-enactments.

<sup>304</sup> However, by naming my informants notions of the mainstream, stereotypical, I am in no way claiming that their views do not hold any validity, as always truth is in the eye of the beholder.

<sup>305</sup> Linked to local relationships, affiliation and identification.

### *The trickster and the value of a lie*

I found that most of my informants considered the ability to transform and recreate mainstream laws, rules and values against external forces, institutions and agents was a game of skill, deceit and trickery. This game was played with different degrees of skill by almost everyone in Hardtown and adepts who played with particular aggression and violence were highly admired within the community.

Suggestions and tips on how to cheat, trick and use the benefit system and the support of the community centre against their so-called benefactors were popular daily topics. Much of my informants' conversation and gossip re-enacted how they themselves or others had managed to extort, trick or deceive these external institutions out of more than the rules would normally or legally have allowed them to receive. My informants often joked that these state institutions' agents might just as well have walked uptown during the night, with a full wallet hanging out of their pockets, since they would have been just as aggressively robbed.

In this connection, I find it interesting to consider Goffman's (1974:83) ideas on 'fabrications', which may be considered as 'the intentional effort of one or more individuals to manage activity so that a party of one or more of others will be induced to have a false belief about what is going on' (cited in R. Bauman 1986:20). For my informants, 'selling a story' or lying to an external institution was both a means of gaining income and a way of misleading outsiders about what was happening in the community or in an individual's life. Lying was therefore used as a means of protection and lent the individual additional safety by its vagueness.

Reflect on some of the many positive aspects attributed contextually to their local notions and representations of lying. My Hardtown informants felt that the ability to handle or manipulate others skilfully, especially external forces and agencies, was highly admired. Note also the need for such narratives in their internal trading within the informal market as well as in external negotiations in connection to the welfare system. Considering the flexibility of the narratives used in these trades and negotiations, which R. Bauman (1986) might suggest:

*"are the instrument of these negotiations (and) do not fall into clear-cut categories of factual and fictional, truthful and lying, believable and incredible, but rather interweave in a complex contextual web that leaves these issues constantly in doubt, ever susceptible to strategic manipulation whenever a trade is joined"* (R. Bauman 1986:32).

I found that the ambiguous and skilful lies or manipulations and trickery used against the individual's own family, friends and social network partners were highly valued and respected within the Hardtown. However, many of my informants emphasised that skill and flexibility were required to avoid being caught out, since the offended individual or his/her networks would otherwise apply sanctions. My informants' behaviour and stories indicated that failing to discredit someone's lie would also be physically and economically hazardous. However to discredit the lie would likewise place Hardtowners in the same precarious situation. (cf. the importance of joking relationships within the Hardtown verbal violence and trickery in Appendix 7).

Following on from this discussion, the next section considers Hardtown temporary and periodic cohesion.

### Temporary and periodic cohesion

Comparing the more common terminology of the 'streetcorner gang', as defined by Suttles (1968), Dunning, Murphy and Williams (1986) and Whyte (1943), I found many similarities with local notions of cohesion in Hardtown, which held equally unstable, but partially existing generational divisions<sup>306</sup>, with a periodic and temporary cohesion facing external or internal forces. However, I found a significant difference in that the factions within Hardtown were more gender equal than these studies indicated.

In Hardtown, there was a preference for 'spontaneous, informal and opportunistic' alliances, holding similarities in some aspects, to Harrison's (1974) 'Bedouin syndrome'<sup>307</sup>, proffered in the Dunning, Murphy and Williams (1986) study of football hooligan behaviour (1986:174)<sup>308</sup>. On closer inspection, I found that this was based on a notion of alliances, cooperation, relatedness and affiliation, which relied on a continuous individual and factional exchange of information and gifts, as well as trading, for its survival. On this basis, it would seem that Hardtown alliances were even more unstable, ambiguous and temporised than the above syndrome recognized and described.

Dunning, Murphy and Williams (1986:175) found that 'the strong degree of age-group segregation in such communities means that many children are sent into the streets to play, unsupervised by adults, at an early age'. In the Hardtown, I found that this did not actually mean that they were unsupervised as supervision was provided at different times by older gang members, family and social network members: all of whom were locally seen as adults. I also found that local age group segregation was neither as complete nor as absolute as the above might suggest. In some gangs, I found individuals from the ages of five to late teens. My Hardtown informants' behaviour and discourse around Diana's table suggested that sending children out unsupervised to play in the streets was a positive and necessary way for children to learn and teach each other local knowledge. It also helped to create the necessary alliances for day-to-day survival, communication, cooperation and trade in the community.

In the streets of the Hardtown as late as midnight, I came across groups of youngsters, both male and female and from the ages of five up to late teens and early twenties, seemingly roaming around, looking for something (or someone) to do. I gradually began to realise that the violence within and between these groups was not only a daily reality, but was also contextually conceived as their main means of entertainment and for the creation of alliances. It brought pleasure, laughter and pain to these individuals; and for many it replaced television as a way of obtaining interactive role models. Many of these children and teens had already

<sup>306</sup> For example, the age grade of an individual changed, if and when the individual became pregnant or a parent, even though the individual would have been conceptualised as a youth or child in normative society.

<sup>307</sup> Using the principles of 'the friend of a friend is a friend; the enemy of an enemy is a friend; the enemy of a friend is an enemy; and the friend of an enemy is an enemy' (Harrison 1974:604 in Dunning, Murphy and Williams 1986:174).

<sup>308</sup> Dunning, Murphy and Williams (1986:173) described a limited study of the confronting and violent mannish style in 'the social generation' of the 'lower working-class communities or at least of specific sections of them'. They linked it to Gerald Suttles' (1968) study of Chicago's poor communities in an overall structure of 'ordered segmentation' (1968:10 in Dunning, Murphy and Williams 1986:173). I found some similar structures in the Hardtown community's segmentation (cf. Chapters 4 and 5): for example, in the suggested concept of smaller segments in the marginal community making up a whole mosaic image. As Suttles stated, these are 'neighbourhoods' that are 'relatively independent of each other', yet with a 'tendency' to band together, in Suttles' case, in 'a fixed sequence' in the face of 'opposition and conflict' (ibid: 173-4). In the present study, I found no evidence for any fixed sequence.

begun working on their reputation and style, copying not only stronger and often older fighters, but also taking tips from films such as Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*. I heard countless references to Tarantino movies, while I was teaching some of these youngsters dancing techniques and I watched them show each other how well they could talk back, using film lingo, and how to incorporate fancy kicks they had seen in these films into their own fighting styles.

By the time they had reached their late teens and early twenties, most of these gangs had become more strictly segmented by age and sex. Before that, there was a certain element of age segregation, but this was negotiable: for example, in cases of early parenthood or when someone held a valuable skill (such as stealing), at least part elevation to the contextual adult world became inevitable (cf. Chapter 4).

I occasionally came across factions of Hardtown inhabitants over the age of twenty on their way to or from some communal action or location. The general consensus of my older informants was, by that age, individuals should behave more like adults, with his/her own flat and attending the local pubs and clubs. However it did not seem to hamper their performances of group violence. One of my young informants sums up the locals attitude: *af'er all, we just do eh for the fun, ken, 'specially if we dinna ha a fiew boab fe going stomping or fe a bo'le*.

Throughout my fieldwork, all of my informants (of all ages) reiterated on a daily basis the importance of everyone sticking together and standing up to outsiders and outside threats, particularly when it came to physical or verbal fights against internal or external enemies. The alliances and affiliations to factions and gangs, even past alliances, could and would be *called in* or used when any one of them faced outside threats or when a communally shared rule was violated. These might include the contextual notion or representation of a dishonourable<sup>309</sup> act, such as informing or attacking a pregnant woman.

In the behaviour and story told by Lisa in the third fragmented scene at the start of this chapter, there is a reference to her belonging to a girl-gang. This seems to have left her with a feeling of responsibility and right to defend<sup>310</sup> any violent threats or slights perpetrated against anyone (in this case, the pregnant girl), belonging to the same gang, family-social network or age group. Her behaviour and the discourse of the fight indicated that her feelings obliged her to avenge this attack, not only because of this past allegiance but also because she had or was sharing a partial trading and exchange right with the pregnant girl.

In internal gang fights over territory or fights against outside gangs or against external forces such as the police, I found that there were more public measures of 'central' control and coordination. While Hardmen were acknowledged as leaders of particular sections of

<sup>309</sup> Despite communal feelings of revulsion about any specific act, contextual local morality precluded anyone from taking revenge on the offender, unless they had specific claims or connections to the individual mistreated or unless specifically asked to do so by the individual in question. In such cases, it might still be contextually considered as a 'dishonourable' way of responding, unless it was against someone that had broken the rules of the community in such a way or to such an extent that he/she completely invalidated and reduced any claims for contextual support and solidarity.

<sup>310</sup> In most of these types of cases, I found a contextual notion, which on a day-to-day basis expressed a partial need to honour and defend any individual belonging to one's own generational faction, gang, residential unit or family-social network: or if in contact or confrontation with 'outsiders', one's communal 'brothers and sisters'. All allegiances to any of these factions were more or less unstable, fragmented and dichotomised in structure. From early adolescence up to parenthood there were strong allegiances to the individual's own generational faction or gang. From that point, most then in part switched his/her allegiance back to his/her family and social networks and the new residential unit.



Hardtown, they were rarely involved in petty squabbles and only became involved if they or their family were directly involved or if the fights escalated. At the more local level, strong leaders of factions, gangs, family and social networks held an overruling notion of control. However, this control was unstable and fragmented as were all Hardtown alignments, contradicting Suttles' (1968) notion that these factions come together 'entirely without central co-ordination or control', yet with their group alignments building up 'according to a fixed sequence' (cited in Dunning, Murphy and Williams 1986:173).

Consider for example the images visualised by the above fragmented writing, which suggested a certain preference for the larger fights: something that kept coming up during the daily conversations within the community centre. My informants clarified that such factional fights were usually under either temporary or permanent leadership, especially during the time immediately before the fighting began. On occasions, this could simply involve an individual calling others to the fight and he/she would be followed, provided his/her status and skill were sufficiently respected to coordinate the fighting. In larger conflicts in the informal market, the local Hardman would be expected to control and coordinate the fights (cf. Chapter 5).

Turning from the local temporary cohesion encountered in the larger conflicts, I take a closer look at gender divisions within the Hardtown performance of violence.

### *An interpretation of gender performances of violence in the Hardtown*

I never encountered the stringent gender segregation and assumed 'male dominance' in Hardtown suggested by Dunning, Murphy and Williams (1986:176) and which they proposed would result in a 'comparatively high rate of male violence towards women'. Nor did I find that Hardtown males were or had ever been subjected to a consistent 'softening female pressure' (ibid:176)<sup>311</sup>.

Instead, I found a community where the fragmented and dichotomised networks and the local notions of morality, immorality, relatedness, identity and work, depended on the intrinsic workings of a functioning duality, constructed on the necessity of male and female cooperation. Both genders were equally necessary in the local performance of violence as well as for the contextual trading. The findings in this thesis reject the conservative, academic mainstream perception, which so often stereotypes and compartmentalises the roles, identities and functions of the female and the male. I suggest that we need to reach beyond these compartmentalising notions to further consider the way that the female and male are locally perceived and the roles that they both have to play within the performances of violence and within the informal market (see more on gender in Appendix 6).

### *Mothers*

The fragmented and violently power-plays which took place on an everyday basis in Hardtown, highlighted a life of suspicion and paranoia, tainting everyone in the community, even individuals that shared residential units.

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<sup>311</sup> The fragmented writing sections of this and other chapters, together with the analysis sections of previous chapters, provide clear evidence that men and women take an equal part in the performance of violence within Hardtown.

During my fieldwork, I found that the most trusted individuals within the community, often the most powerful and certainly the ones most often in charge of financial control<sup>312</sup> were the mothers. In this matricentric community, both my female and male informants often underlined that they held the strongest trust in their mother, more than they trusted either their siblings or partners. Many emphasised that only a fool trusted anyone completely, even someone of the same *blood*. As one of my informants stated: *Ye should nea trust nea one, but ye can trust yer mum more than others, ken* (see more on Hardtown relatedness and trust in Chapter 4).

I was often advised that, when any individual felt threatened by internal or external forces, they habitually turned to their mother for advice and support. I was assured that this even applied within Hardman families, where the Hardman's mother often acted as the final or at least co-arbiter in sibling disputes. There was an exceptional catalogue of stories and myths of how mothers worked together, behind the scenes or *up front*, to construct a strong mixed-gender cohesion, which clearly contradicts the imagery of the sole mobilisation of an 'allegiance of males throughout a community' as suggested by Dunning, Murphy and Williams (1986:175).

However, this feeling was not generally agreed among all of my Hardtown informants, as some had left his/her childhood residential unit under troubled circumstances: for example, Jane's family situation (cf. Chapter 4).

### Female solidarity

There was evidence for a strong cohesion, albeit only periodically and of a temporary nature, between females from all local residential units, factions, gangs and family and social networks in the face of excessive male domestic violence. As discussed earlier in this chapter, a degree of domestic and other forms of violence by both genders was tolerated, if not expected, in this community. However, all of my informants seemed to feel an obligation to defend each other from male violence, often in conflict with other aspects of their entire dichotomised behaviour.

From time to time, I saw women who did not like each other, who were rivals in local trading and who did not share networks, come together in a group to defend another woman against a physical assault from a male. Even if this violence happened some time earlier in the woman's home, the group of women approached the man in a show of strength: threatening him with verbal and physical violence as well as sanctions or restrictions within the informal market. If the man in question did not adhere to these warnings, it was not unusual for one or more of these women to fight him, beat him severely and then *bad mouth* him by belittling him throughout the community. If he did not make immediate reparations to his victim and mend his ways, the man would be cut off from his connections within the informal market, with harsh effects on his finances.

<sup>312</sup> I found that a Hardman could not assume the title and could not be contextually viewed as a true Hardman without the active support and cooperation of females within his residential unit, family and social networks helping him establish his right to the title. These females would show this by their financial, verbal and physical support, together with handling the trading, exchanges and other financial matters, as well as coordinating some of the performances of violence. This is a prime example of gender cooperation within the Hardtown hierarchy.

During my fieldwork, I sat through many discussions on how women dealt, physically or verbally, with a man who had gone beyond the limits of the community's acceptable levels of violence (some violence was locally considered as positive). Consider the case of Diana's sister's boyfriend, discussed in Chapter 5. He had continuously threatened her, *bad mouthed* her in the neighbourhood, was physically violent<sup>313</sup> to her and had given away the residential unit's money to another woman. In most conversations around this time, Diana emphasised that she and her relatives had threatened him with physical injury. They had also made sure to cut him off from his connections within the informal economy and stated that, if he did not cease his bad behaviour, they would have to make an example of him as he was shaming both her sister and her whole family. I found out later that Diana, her sisters and her female cousins had managed to get hold of this man on his own, beaten him severely and marked him with a bottle to make sure that he and others realised that this behaviour was totally unacceptable.

### Summary

This chapter suggested that the performance of voicing and doing violence was a local means of constructing a ritual and dramatic performance of identity, togetherness and unity. This was connected with the local informal market and an unstable and ambiguous morality. It was also closely connected with a position of violent opposition and insubordination, often using the excuse of drugs or alcohol, towards the real or imagined subjugation and domination by external forces: their dependence on welfare benefits and the negative state, moral-political and marginalising discourse that my informants felt attempted to control and coerce them.

My informants expressed a local enjoyment in violence as well as in the power that the violence brought. This violence was felt to provide a break in the daily boredom and many considered it as a good way to entertain themselves and others, while simultaneously gaining status, a *buzz* or *high* and *having a laugh*.

I found that this entertaining yet socially intrinsic and empowering insubordination in the Hardtown informant's oppositional 'violent' performances against the external institutions and their agents was often fuelled by their use of inebriated behaviour, irony, sarcasm and aggression. Chapter 1 showed that this insubordination had strong historical roots.

The violent scenes described in the fragmented images at the start of this chapter and throughout this thesis have, together with other information I received from my informants, portrayed an accurate image of Hardtown. This image described a community where trading, exchanges, communication, friendship, closeness and relatedness were highly infused with the contextual importance placed on violence, through a legitimisation of a contextually fluid and fragmented moral discourse against mainstream notions and compartmentalisation.

I found that, while there was a degree of generational segregation within Hardtown, there was essentially little or no difference in the participation, skill or high status accruing to both females and males in the local enjoyment of mind-games and the physical performances of violence. The contextually intrinsic social need for both females and males to participate in

<sup>313</sup> I do not know how common domestic violence is in the Hardtown, but through Hardtown conversations I found that for some it is not necessarily a private affair. The topic was widely gossiped about and many women discussed their own situation with friends. Naturally I did not actually witness any such violence, however I did occasionally see some of my informants with black eyes.

the daily performance of violence and the informal economy was exemplified by the necessity for gender cooperation in the process of making a Hardman, the highest level in the Hardtown hierarchy. I found that exceptional individual proficiency in physical or verbal violence was not enough: to reach this position, the up-and-coming Hardman would need continual support, cooperation and endorsement from both females and males in his residential unit, family and social networks.

Referring to Riche's (1986:22) suggestion that 'the notion of violence could reasonably be employed as a means to conceptualise the essence of social relationships', I reiterate my view that the contextual performance of violence represents and maintains the fragmented and dichotomised communal Hardtown ethos as well as its social identity. They use violence to protect themselves from the life of slavery, implicit in mainstream society, to which they believe so many others have succumbed.



### **Conclusion: Between a rock and a hard place: a few end remarks**

This thesis simply aspired to describe and illustrate the social lives and opinions of a group of one-parents, who attended the GRcc in Hardtown on a regular basis. As the above heading suggests, my fieldwork and analysis have lead me to the conclusion that my informants' daily lives were a constant struggle for survival in a difficult environment. In order to cope with this environment, many have instead subscribed to the local notions of power and status that allowed them to access commodities through the informal market. However, this was not without cost, since I found that most had diverse and contradictory affiliations and identities, which obliged them to perform verbal and physical violence on a daily basis.

Many people living in the Hardtown council estate often talked about not being able to leave the community or escape the lifestyle of the community. Most of my informants blamed the government and other external forces for their predicament, laying particular stress on the relish with which agents of the state<sup>314</sup> conspired to keep them, in their words, *'awa fae each o'her, dun and well poor; all making sure tha we canna and widnae hae a fucking chance te gi awa fae here or do nout abut how we live, like'*.

At the same time, many also blamed their fellow inhabitants on the estate for making it very difficult for anyone 'trapped' in their way of life to escape or indeed want to escape. This was accomplished mainly through the local hierarchy and notions of morality, which in effect kept them tied to the community and way of life by cutting off anyone who left their networks in the community e.g. by joining the ranks of the 'straight' workers. For example, consider the situation Darla faced when she paid a brief visit to the GRcc some time after she had left the community to take up lucrative employment in Manchester.

As a result of this fragmentation and dichotomy, I gradually came to consider their situation in terms of their always being caught between the proverbial 'rock and a hard place'.

In the present investigation, I found that my informants described their council estate as a space that was fractured by constant toil and stress<sup>315</sup>, fraught with paranoia, fear and in the constant throes of conflict: battles waged for trading rights in the informal market or for local positions of power. Success in this struggle was often only temporary as it depended on individual skill and prowess in the contextual performances of verbal and physical violence, which also rendered it malleable and negotiable (see Chapters 5 and 6).

In this local ethos of violence<sup>316</sup>, the key image I retain and present in this thesis was the shared notion of pragmatism and utilitarianism that each of my informants displayed in every action and voiced in every opinion. These two factors helped bind them together, albeit on a very temporary basis, in their functional re-evaluations and flexible representations of local notions of work and trading relationships (cf. Chapters 5 and 6). This fluid Hardtown morality was combined with a fragmented identity to create a state of flux, which allowed the essential daily negotiations with family or social networks, other Hardtowners or even external forces. For example, bargaining allowed participants in the informal market access to commodities they would otherwise not be able to afford (see Chapter 4).

<sup>314</sup> For example, doctors, police and social service staff.

<sup>315</sup> Paradoxically, they lived their lives within an ethos of violence that was considered as an expression of anger/laughter, separation/togetherness and punishment/entertainment.

<sup>316</sup> This Hardtown ethos of violence embodied a transient and fluid morality.

However, their way of life also created internal divisions. The succession of internal conflicts, were trials of strength in which each participant staked his/her reputation, status and even life. Given that not everyone in Hardtown held the same notions of work, status and morality, they also lived in constant fear of informers revealing personal information to either the police or social services.

In this socio-economically-impooverished community, these various factors combined to create an everyday situation that has fostered a strong need for individual competition and survival, using almost every means accessible to them in this harsh environment, in the face of a daily onslaught from state institutions and multiple world images and representations.

### **Hardtown interpretations of violence**

The previous chapter indicated that the Hardtown performance of violence played a central role in most of the socially intrinsic areas of the community: the spatial division and dichotomy (Chapter 2), boredom and togetherness (Chapter 3), family and social networks (Chapter 4), employment (Chapter 5) as well as its local hierarchy (Chapter 6).

In the hope of sharpening the focus on the lives of the socio-economically-marginal Hardtown individuals, I now concentrate on the more micro-oriented areas of my analysis. For example: what did my Hardtown informants feel about violence; how did they express and define the performance of violence and what importance did violence have and embody within the community?

In no particular order, the following list summarises the various factors that Diana and my other informants expressed about verbal and physical violence in diverse conversations, gossip and stories:

1. A way of living;
2. A necessity for everyday survival;
3. A tool for gaining commodities, money, reputation, status, power and success;
4. A means of gaining pleasure and a *high*;
5. A means of entertainment for participants and onlookers;
6. A means of communication;
7. A means of settling scores with or *sort 'in ut* enemies;
8. A way of staying active and not letting the traps of boredom and/or social inequity take away their self-awareness and pride;
9. A means of facilitating cooperation with others in the community;
10. A way of opposing and sanctioning outsiders, such as social security staff;
11. A way of opposing and sanctioning locals who broke their socio-moral codes;
12. A way of emphasising friendships and alliances.

Many Hardtowners viewed violence as one of the key embodiments of power<sup>317</sup> within the community. As such, violence might be considered as the glue that joined contextually separate and distinct sections of the community together, albeit often only on a temporary basis. Violence might therefore be seen as breaching as well as separating Hardtown, at the same time as it entertained and controlled everyone within the community. However, it still

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<sup>317</sup> Status, control and coercion.

functioned as the essential conduit for communication over and between the internal personal, residential unit, family and social network boundaries. For example, Diana and most of the other long-term unemployed in the community<sup>318</sup> did not seem to consider the performance of verbal and physical violence as intrinsically good or bad, but rather as something that held a degree of negotiability. Its importance, interpretation and local value depended entirely on the immediate short-term context and the skill, status and reputation of the individuals involved.

As with most areas of the Hardtown community, the performance of violence seemed to be linked through the contextual notion of pragmatism, often expressed as 'whatever it takes to get by', usually coupled with a laugh indicating their collective dark sense of humour. I would therefore like to continue by illustrating what my study has shown the suffering and stress faced by my informants on a daily basis might suggest.

### ***Social suffering***

The behaviour of my informants depicted an everyday life that was dogged by long-term unemployment, boredom and violence as well as an everyday dichotomy<sup>319</sup> in the face of both internal and external threats and forces. These factors combined to create a permanent feeling of paranoia, fragmentation and stress<sup>320</sup>, which can be interpreted as a form of social suffering. Coupled with the moral-political stigmatism and exclusion, which they believed they faced from external forces and institutions<sup>321</sup>, this resulted in a daily feeling of otherness among the Hardtowners.

I found that the Hardtowners perceived external, mainstream institutions and forces as the enemy or evil villains who tried to disempower them: a significant concept. This allowed them to transform and recreate positive mainstream values and notions into their contextual opposites or, at best, passive ambivalence. This also allowed them to selectively interpret and re-evaluate certain mainstream values and notions for their own purposes and as a part of the defence of every Hardtowners.

Throughout my fieldwork, the behaviour and local views of my informants indicated an individual and periodically collective local embodiment and use of multiple identities of self. I suggest that this was a pragmatic and utilitarian way for Hardtowners to subvert their fragmented and fluid social structures and optimise their individual and network affiliations to their advantage in this dangerous environment. In other words, they believed that it was necessary to develop manipulative and diverse identities to improve their own personal

<sup>318</sup> When I asked my informants directly about what they felt about violence and violent acts, most pretended that they misunderstood the question and the questioner or turned the question round, demanding to know why I had asked the question. Even when I felt that the atmosphere was comparatively relaxed and the question innocuous, it was as if I was casting doubt on his/her personal ability. The implication was that I truly did not belong or fit into the community if I had to ask such a question. Some became increasingly aggressive when directly questioned on the subject and seemed to take my questions disparagingly, as if I had suggested that they did not fully belong within the Hardtown community and the fraternity of the informal market.

<sup>319</sup> These everyday factors may be viewed as placing these individuals in a 'continuously exposed' situation, in which they are forced to deal with continual 'stressful events or stressors' (Bohnen, Nicolson, Sulon and Jolles 1990:141). I suggest that the ability of an individual to adapt to rapidly changing stressors is the determining factor in how well the individual will function under stress. It is therefore interesting that much Hardtown discourse involves them sharing knowledge of mechanisms to cope with and alleviate the symptoms of stress.

<sup>320</sup> I am here considering stress using Steven Locke's (1982:49) definition of the term as 'both the "stressor" and the subjective, inner experience of distress (really "strain")'.

<sup>321</sup> Such as the police, the government and the social services.



chances of success, both as a defence mechanism and as an interactive and communicative negotiating tool against internal and external forces. The Hardtowners also used these malleable personas to renegotiate the negative identities, into which they feel mainstream society has pigeonholed them.

I propose that mainstream notions of evil, shame, honour and violence are also subject to never-ending renegotiation, relocation and recreation by Hardtowners. This fluid approach has created a community, which mainstream values and morality would consider as transient, in terms of identity and honour. I found that my informants considered identity and honour as pragmatic variables, perhaps best summarised by one of my informants: *as much as eh can gi awa with*<sup>322</sup>, which essentially means that anything was allowed in their daily utilitarian strife to obtain what they wanted or needed<sup>323</sup>.

The validity of the community's opinions, actions and reactions is supported by Julian Pitt-Rivers' (1965:21) suggestion that 'honour is the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of his society'.

By studying my Hardtown informants' behaviour and expressions, I found that they used the negative opinions of the state's agents as an important tool against these same agents. For example, Hardtowners used their feelings of being excluded and marginalized to gain an *edge* in their negotiations with the social services, using and transforming their 'otherness' into a positive tool to access further benefits. This was locally considered as an honourable way to supplement income, which might also reflect positively on an individual's status in the community (see Chapters 5 and 6). I also found that many used this fluid value structure to oppose other Hardtown factions or gangs who tried to dominate them.

My study also uncovered the utilitarian and pleasurable side of Hardtown violence, criminality and double-dealing (see Chapter 6). With the possible exception of proponents of sado-masochism, this stands in stark contrast to most external notions, which condemn such behaviour as shameful and evil, whilst demonstrating a fear of pain<sup>324</sup>. I found that the Hardtowners considered that fear heightened the pleasure and entertainment value of violence at the same time as it threatened the possible destruction of the individuals and networks concerned. For my informants, the notion of fear was also contextual knowledge that might be shared in gossip or trade and it also warned them to when the might have to renegotiate and re-evaluate their own position and status in the community.

In this connection, it is perhaps of interest to offer Allan Young's (1997:253) notion that 'fear is the memory of pain' and that this binds individuals to future actions, which he suggests would 'allow the organism to avoid pain, injury and death' (ibid: 255). In the present study, I have also linked the experience and recollection of pain to past instances of violence, pain and fear. However, the difference is that the Hardtowners simultaneously conceptualise this fear as something dually positive and/or negative (see Chapter 6)<sup>325</sup>. This study shows that, while my informants at times came to use fear as a tool of avoidance, to simply equate the

<sup>322</sup> This comment was made by one of my informants during a conversation about morality in the community. She admitted that her own morality was, '*as much as I can get away with*'!

<sup>323</sup> This is essentially the same as the commercial ethos, which holds that more is better.

<sup>324</sup> I should like to emphasise that I was here trying to render and interpret the Hardtown notions, representations and evaluations of violence, fear and pain and neither condone nor try to justify these notions.

<sup>325</sup> Fear is linked to social suffering, which seems to be locally conceptualised as part of the internal and external power dichotomy, unemployment, boredom, poverty and stigmatism.



reasons for their behaviour with Young's ideas, would only give an incomplete picture of the Hardtown social and moral structure, in which fear is seen as something honourable, to be confronted head on<sup>326</sup>.

Moreover, I consider that Cannon's 'depathologizing' notions (in Young 1997:255) that 'represent fear and anger' as a mobilisation, might be compared to the local struggle for access to commodities that I encountered in the constant machinations of my Hardtown informants. I suggest that the Hardtowners' behaviour<sup>327</sup> might signify and express a similar 'transient state of adaptive arousal' to that offered in Cannon's study, while simultaneously expressing and representing a shared knowledge (ibid:255).

I found that this constant internal and external power struggle forced my informants to face a multitude of pressures and threats, which developed into and created local feelings of fragmentation, isolation and suspicion. It also seemed that my informants subsequently used these feelings as 'a means to an end' (their expression) and created a tool, with which they were able to modify their individual and network skills pragmatically for everyday survival. This utilitarian tool and the high local regard and value placed on individual adaptability and malleability, gave them the ability to generate fluid and fragmented local identities as a means of survival and success.

In similar fashion, I found that my informants were able to use Hardtown adaptability to redefine the local notions of boredom into a tool, with which they were able to oppose and defend themselves against external forces (see Chapter 3).

### **Conflict-Opposition**

In this study, I found that the Hardtowners' performance of violence was intrinsically linked with local notions of status, honour and shame in public demonstrations, which seemed to be essential for the interaction and the social structure within Hardtown. Paradoxically, I found that my informants could also gain local status and honour by equally public demonstrations of their indifference to their boredom and unemployed status. I suggest that these were basically two sides of the same coin: a tool to fight their internal angst and *take a stab at* the external forces. On the other hand, it was considered a weakness for any individual avoiding his/her participation in the performance of violence or the informal market as many thought that such an individual lacked honour.

This thesis has illustrated some of the internal and external struggles and oppositions, which my Hardtown informants faced on a daily basis: power, spatial, social and economic. However, I also found that there was a strict yet fluid local notion of honour and morality in their social structure, seemingly created out of this environment of stress and suspicion (see Chapters 5 and 6). This agrees with J Peristiany's (1965:10-11) comments about the constant 'insecurity and instability of the honour-shame ranking', in which individual Hardtowners experienced constant threats to themselves and their networks. As a consequence of these threats, my informants seemed to feel the need to assert themselves or be 'on show' (ibid: 11) as they tried to solicit support and access information, cooperation, commodities and status.

<sup>326</sup> Hardtowners conceive the possibility of pain, injury and even death as locally honourable, often enjoyable and not as something that should be primarily avoided. They seemed to glorify or at least jokingly and bravely accept fear and individuals used it for fun or to obtain a *high*, acquiring local identity and status in the process.

<sup>327</sup> Illustrated in the study by the performance of violence.

This resulted in a complex weave of many worlds, societies, factions and notions in conflict with each other, which provided my informants with yet another reason to add multiplicity<sup>328</sup> and an adaptive quality to their pragmatic view of their everyday milieu.

Some of my informants insisted that their present opposition was directly linked to the local history of resistance to external forces<sup>329</sup> using verbal and physical violence as a form of community politics (see Chapter 1). The theme of many of their stories was past and present resentment and anger against external powers, which were often depicted as dehumanising Hardtowners and demonising their way of life. Many also felt that they had little or no choice in the matter as they had either been born into this life or had been forced into it and lacked the means to change the future. As a result, Hardtowners seem to have created the attitude or necessity of living for the present moment, while exploiting any and every opportunity that came along. This brings me back once again to my informants' behaviour and their stories of the effects of long-term unemployment and contacts with social service agents, which have led to the image I present of their utilitarianism and pragmatism in everyday life.

In this thesis, I have chosen to interpret my informants' behaviour as empowering. The insolent behaviour of some of my informants seemed to be a conscious and deliberate act to juxtapose their ethos of violence and their notions of morality, work and identity on every possible occasion and in the face of the mainstream notions that they assumed every outsider they came across held, in particular agents of the social services! While this may very well be a way of seeking power or empowerment, I would like to point out that most Hardtowners were more utilitarian and pragmatic in outlook and used insolence as a tool to open up avenues for personal gain. For this reason, I propose that my informants consciously expressed internal and external processes and manifestations, which allowed them to survive in this impoverished and harsh socio-economical environment. They did this, for instance, by creating an internal hierarchy and access to power that necessarily devalued, dishonoured and opposed the external others. In addition, many of my informants thought in purely utilitarian terms: as one of my informants put it: *ken, mate eh am getting by right as best eh can mate, eh di wha eh ha to for mi and meh bairns to gi by...*

The next section briefly considers the multi-fragmented internal Hardtown identity and links it to all of the above sections and the local notion of need and necessity.

### **The fragmented 'other'**

#### **The Hardtown fragmented identities, exclusion and the Mainstream.**

From the Hardtowners' perspective, most found it necessary to use multi-fragmented, imaginary identities to cope with the internal and external conflicts. This enabled the locals to traverse and negotiate their everyday survival pragmatically in a society, which many external agents still considered as stagnant, despite these contextual renegotiations. However, the local society was only considered as passive-static by mainstream institutions, such as the benefit agency, whose agents were themselves described by the Hardtowners as *'bunch af lazy fucks doin no 'in but si' 'in on their fucking arses!'* Through the eyes of my informants, these agents were hypocrites, who had *'nea real trade'*, at the same time as they lectured Hardtowners on the merits of this way of life and tried to make them conform to mainstream and supposedly

<sup>328</sup> This also includes a continuous re-evaluation of honour, values and morals.

<sup>329</sup> These include government policies, institutions and agents.

more 'real' notions of work<sup>330</sup>. There is little doubt that my informants felt separated, excluded and alienated from the mainstream world inhabited by these agents.

It is therefore not surprising that Hardtowners had daily conflicts and negotiations with mainstream institutions<sup>331</sup> and their agents (see Chapter 5). However, it is also true to say that not everyone in Hardtown fully wanted to acknowledge the necessity for contact with or dependency on these outside forces as they felt that the 'giro-wage' was a state tool for disempowerment and control. Paradoxically, most Hardtowners appeared to be ambivalent about this contact and dependency: they would love to be able to sever all ties with this 'dominating enemy force' but pragmatically extracted as many benefits as possible from these agents and institutions (see Chapter 5). In this way, they had turned suspicion, fear and conflict into a marketable force for their improvement and created a form of local empowerment.

My study also indicates that Hardtowners had other links to the external world and the straight working man through the local informal market and stealing from shops and the other communities in Dundee<sup>332</sup>. Although a few of my informants recognised that negative political rhetoric was often aimed at them, most were either unaware or chose to ignore this as irrelevant. However, everyone was all too aware of the commoditisation spoon-fed to him/her by the media. My informants suggested that the pressure from these other external forces created additional uncertainty, isolation and a lack of trust of all outsiders. All these factors combined to produce the impression that they felt excluded from the mainstream way of life and had no rights, other than those they took for themselves. As outsiders or unvalued 'others', they nevertheless wanted the same commodities and standard of living as everyone else and, finding these out of their reach by legitimate means, they resorted to non-legal means.

This pragmatic acceptance of a local notion, which focused on the actions required to circumvent problems (i.e. to use or be used)<sup>333</sup>, was an essential part of the Hardtown social structure. I propose that this pragmatism has influenced the creation and employment of an internal, imaginary multi-sitedness in Hardtown's diverse and continually changing and conflicting identities.

The notion of taking advantage was emphasised by my long-term unemployed one-parent informants in the Hardtown. This was linked and interacted with their multiple, local, ambivalent, conflicting and often-fluid notions of sex, family and social network affiliations (see Chapter 4) which have created the need for the Hardtowners to be able to adapt and interact in diverse ways. This essentially meant that everyone adjusted his/her identity and affiliations to suit the company he/she was in and focused on the individual or individuals who offered the most advantageous deal. This thesis also indicates that my informants even used their conceptualisation as separate or excluded 'others' to create a communal, utilitarian notion of resistance and opposition, based on the exploitation of mainstream society. As my informants often stated, it would be a 'crime' not to use anything and exploit anyone who was foolish enough to be used. Anecdotal accounts of individual 'coups' were well received by all and became part of local knowledge and legend. On this basis, I suggest that the Hardtowners

<sup>330</sup> Some Hardtowners felt that their social service agents simply assumed that they had, by choice, willingly severed themselves from legal work and all its inherent obligations and rights.

<sup>331</sup> Such as benefit agencies, police and community centre staff.

<sup>332</sup> My fieldwork indicated that many Hardtowners did not favour the notion of stealing from within their own community (see Chapter 5).

<sup>333</sup> The Hardtowners did not consider using someone else to their own gain as an immoral act (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6).



interpreted their exclusion and their imaginary multi-sitedness of identity as pragmatic local tools to be employed against these external forces and powers.

The present study also found that the contextual Hardtown construction encountered and embodied multiple and diverse worldviews, mainly through the media but also through their links to external institutions and other local communities. In many ways, this further fragmented the Hardtown community and the creation of local and individual identities, as well as their affiliations. I found that my Hardtown informants used the fluid, ambivalent and contextually positive and honourable role of the trickster to adapt to these diverse worldviews and notions and their internal need for multiple affiliations. In this way, they were quickly able to adjust by 'acting out a part' to overcome and, hence, oppose any hindrance by internal and external forces.

They also used the role of trickster in the much more general sense of changing their multi-fragmented identities to suit the circumstances and access paths not otherwise available to them and thus increase their chances of socio-economic success in the informal market or with the social services (see Chapter 6). Playing the trickster was considered as an essential, positive attribute in Hardtown, where even tricking or lying to anyone's own residential unit or social network was seen and understood to be admirable: as one of my informant's stated '*if di gi awa wi eh*'. Success at lying and trickery was locally considered as a sign of a keen, agile and tactical mind: an essential attribute for anyone aspiring to become a Hardman, the most coveted and highest hierarchical position in the community.

Paraphrasing my informants' expressions, I found that they believed that mainstream notions categorised Hardtowners as less than human. Bearing this in mind, I found that the Hardtown 'virtue' of trickery and their fragmented identities could transform their feelings of exclusion from mainstream society into something positive. Their segregation thus created a temporary and intermittent local Hardtown exclusivity of the excluded, where honour lay in belonging within the category of the excluded other<sup>334</sup>. Their feeling of not belonging to the mainstream society was cultivated and used as a tool in negotiations with, for example, the social services, police, doctors and other external forces or institutions. This allowed them access to giro-wages, extra social benefits, repeat prescriptions and other such support.

Even within this notion of shared utilitarianism, my investigation disclosed that not everything was just a means to an end within the Hardtown community centre. For example, I found that violence was locally used as a tool for entertainment and pleasure and a means of sharing togetherness, giving them a sense of inclusion within the exclusivity of marginality.

The Hardtowners' typically pragmatic answer to their dichotomised daily lives was the use of fluid and negotiable multi-fragmented yet often conflicting social, emotional, financial and geographical local identities. As an essential part of their internal social structure, this transformation allowed each of them to traverse and negotiate family and social networks (cf. Chapter 4); personal isolation and external forces (cf. Chapters 2, 4 and 5); internal notions of boredom (cf. Chapter 3) and hierarchical status. It also allowed them to survive by taking full advantage of any utilitarian means that were locally and conceptually viewed as necessary. In this way, each of my informants was able to access funds, consumer goods and cooperation to improve him/herself as well as his/her network. As such, many considered it as yet another essential survival tool in the complex and fragmented mosaic of the Hardtown power struggles.

<sup>334</sup> I had direct personal experience of this as my informants accepted me as a fellow 'excluded other' because they saw me as a student surviving on a grant and as a stranger to British society.



Moreover, I suggest that their contextual dichotomised and fragmented notions of identity found, in their local ethos of violence, an expression and exclamation of their notion of both a holistic and individual freedom. Ironically, this expression stands in paradox against their continual, self-proclaimed existence without freedom, with which the Hardtowners tried to generate an internal notion of freedom against external domination. However, I did find a few Hardtowners who claimed '*We are fucking mere free than ye are, ken! Special as we are right making our own fucking brand spankin new choices ourselves like, o'her than the shite ones ye*<sup>335</sup> gave us. Despite this assertion, these same informants still expressed their lack of choices in deciding their future for themselves. Paraphrasing the actual words used, one of my informants claimed 'me, I am what they (the external forces) have made me into'. In the next breath, she added 'I am what I am, even though those bastards have tried to turn me into someone else'.

### **Postscript**

I should like to emphasise that I chose to use fragmented writing and the visual images this offered to try to depict as faithfully as possible the individual and communal conflicts and opposing fragmentation that my informants faced on an everyday basis.

I chose to use ethnography in this thesis to emphasise everyday situations within such a socio-economically marginal community. In this way, I hoped that my accounts of everyday ethnographic reality might minimise prejudice and counteract the political propaganda, which tars marginalized individuals such as: Hardtowners, one-parents, unemployed and homeless with the same brush, by categorising them all as undeserving 'others'<sup>336</sup> (cf. ideas for further studies in Appendix 8).

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<sup>335</sup> Mainstream society and external forces.

<sup>336</sup> The article 'Beggars in land of the not so free' ('Housing' September 1994 page 15) provided an interesting twist in the discussion of political rhetoric. It showed that the political rhetoric, which has been used over the last few years against single mothers, was not unique to the UK but actually originated in the USA. It stated 'British politicians who advocated the use of police powers to remove homeless beggars from the streets or who designed policies to stop single mothers 'jumping the queue' for social housing, are merely imitating politicians in the US'. I would suggest that the similarity may be seen either as an imitation of the US process or as a bi-product of the similar socio-economic policies pursued in the UK and the US over the last 15 - 20 years. I would also point out that both states have deregulated labour markets and reduced taxes and that parts of the public sector have either been reduced or eliminated.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: Introduction and validation of fragmented writing

My use of fragmented writing, such as flashbacks, non-linear stories and segments of dialogue, reflects the ethnographic narrative, black humour and explosive violence of many stories told daily in the Hardtown<sup>337</sup>. Most of these stories echo my informants' feelings of not belonging anywhere, being excluded or 'put upon' by others<sup>338</sup> and I hope that this style of writing captures and expresses the isolation, fear and, indeed, enjoyment felt by Hardtowners in this modern, socio-economically-marginal crime land.

#### Verbal narrative

At the time of my fieldwork, the type of language<sup>339</sup> used by the Hardtowners showed a clear correlation with the type of language portrayed in Quentin Tarantino's films. In the Hardtown informal market and the everyday local narrative-dialogues<sup>340</sup>, his highly violent and aggressive catchphrases were commonly used to embody the criminal and socio-economically-marginal undertones of their lives (cf. Chapter 6).

In particular, their local gossip and verbal violence bore a remarkable resemblance to the violent and darkly humoured<sup>341</sup> dialogue and style of oral story telling used by Tarantino to depict the lifestyles of everyday criminals in modern America. In most daily discussions, I found the Hardtowners using snappy, fast rejoinders and a plethora of cheeky comments with harsh, sexual and violent undertones to bait others. Paradoxically, these exchanges took on the emotive colour of friendliness in a hard, violent style, which lent itself to fragmented images of what was or could be felt, said and insinuated about each other, mostly veiled and obscured in their internally diverse dialect. The words and connotations they used held specific, local meanings, pertaining to a knowledge only intended and devised for those 'in the ken!'

#### Physical manifestations of violence

It seemed to me that the Hardtowners had developed fighting contextually in an artful fashion, giving it a poetic air and a quality suggestive of dancing. Their expressions, language and movement seemed to be designed for and geared towards the presence of an audience, almost as if the fighters were being filmed or performing a play<sup>342</sup>, for the enjoyment of both the combatants and a potential audience (cf. Chapter 6).

<sup>337</sup> The fragmented style of writing I have used is loosely based on influences from the cinematic works of Quentin Tarantino and, by extension, such literary styles as James Joyce in *Ulysses* and the Swedish Nobel Prize winner Eyvind Johnson in *Strändernas Svall*.

<sup>338</sup> These stories were also often linked to local criminal activities.

<sup>339</sup> I use the term language in the broad sense of the terminology, semantics, connotations, aphorisms and phrases used in everyday activities.

<sup>340</sup> Concerning the informal market, its local manifestations, structure, economy and sanctions.

<sup>341</sup> I found that the Hardtowners habitually used dark, violent and fragmented humour in a very similar way to the paranoid-humoured, cinematographic style of Tarantino's movies. The community and the movies also shared a bleak and lacklustre imagery that, together with the narrative-dialogue, seemed to portray and embody a striking resemblance to the fragmented and linguistic landscapes of individual Hardtowners, who negotiated, created and recreated themselves through the analogous daily presence of crime, paranoia, despair and isolation.

<sup>342</sup> It seemed that each fighter was concerned with how everything would look and be interpreted by others and that he/she was always thinking and moving, not only for him/herself or in any instantaneous, angry-aggressive,

I often saw young men and women rehearsing<sup>343</sup> their most 'impressive' kicks and punches behind the GRcc, presumably to improve their way of fighting. However, many of my informants claimed that, when fighting, it was not simply enough to be the best but they also wanted to look their best. In particular, certain difficult kicks, such as the 'round' kick, were highly admired and, if elegantly executed, added status to someone's fighting reputation. However, fighting prowess was evaluated by the total combat skills of a Hardtown individual and not just by the perfection of a few nice moves<sup>344</sup>.

Although fights between individual combatants were prevalent, fights between gangs or factions were also common. All fights were viewed as entertaining and prestigious.

I found that many of the frequenters of the GRcc, including my main informants, had either repeatedly seen (often with others) or actually owned most, if not all, of Tarantino's movies<sup>345</sup>. As a fellow enthusiast of these movies, I noted that many Hardtowners used quotes from Tarantino as an intrinsic part of their performances of verbal and physical violence, on a daily basis<sup>346</sup>. Some of my informants often expressed in conversations an understanding of, familiarity with and empathy for Tarantino's cinematically dark vision of the American, post-industrial, urban crime land and could see the parallels with *their* own situation: *eh mate eh ken wha our life es aboot! Nea fucking aboot!* However, just before I left Hardtown, I noted a slight change in the local dialogue: British films such as '*Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*' had been released and had begun to influence their use of language.

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auto-reactive manner, but always with the audience's opinion of the moves, language and the whole picture in mind.

<sup>343</sup> The verbal and physical performances of Hardtown violence continuously displayed signs of stringent, neatly choreographed and well rehearsed fighting stances and movements. Although there were frequent alternations of hard, fast kicks and punches, the overall impression was often of almost measured, deliberate and slow motion, slapstick fighting. Many of the fighting moves and scenes also bore a strong resemblance to the cinematographic style found in fighting scenes in Tarantino's movies or other such violent fight and action movies.

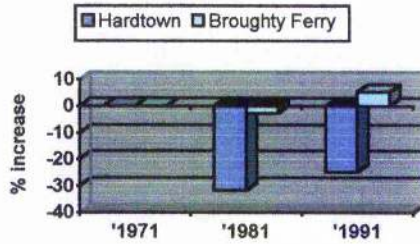
<sup>344</sup> This also included prowess in using a 'shank' when fighting.

<sup>345</sup> I concluded this after noting some of my informants' video collections.

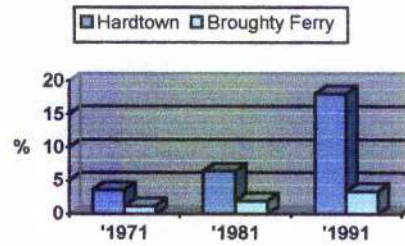
<sup>346</sup> Adapted to suit the local situation and the moment.

## ***APPENDIX 2: Statistical information and tables***

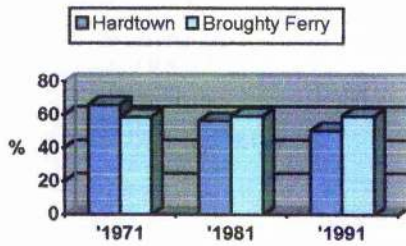
**fig.1 - Population changes**



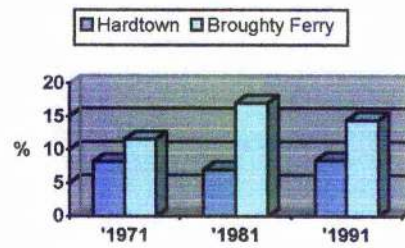
**fig.2 - Lone Parent**



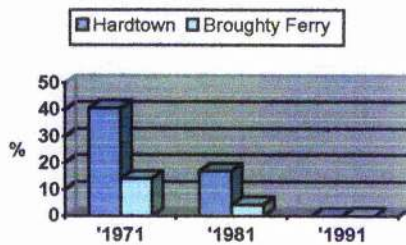
**fig.3 - Economically active**



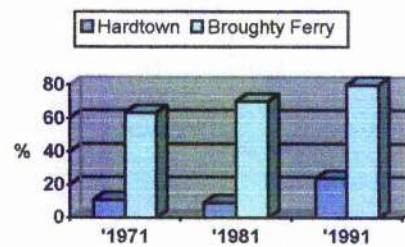
**Fig.4 - Student**



**fig.5 - Lack of 1 amenity**



**fig.6 - Property ownership**





<i>Description</i>	<b>Hardtown</b>			<b>Broughty Ferry</b>		
	<b>1971</b>	<b>1981</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>1981</b>	<b>1991</b>
<b>Population</b>	<b>2921</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>2197</b>	<b>16527</b>	<b>16085</b>	<b>17415</b>
<b>Population (Age 16+)</b>	<b>2379</b>	<b>1724</b>	<b>1924</b>	<b>12111</b>	<b>12571</b>	<b>14465</b>
<b>Economically Active</b>	<b>1566 (65.8%)</b>	<b>963 (55.9%)</b>	<b>966 (50.2%)</b>	<b>7098 (58.6%)</b>	<b>7427 (59.1%)</b>	<b>8570 (59.2%)</b>
F/T Employment	1143	602	629	5338	5274	5757
P/T Employment	215	157	140	1061	1200	1598
Self Employed	52	43	45	483	534	810
Unemployed	153	158	152	212	416	404
<b>Economically Inactive</b>	<b>813 (34.2%)</b>	<b>761 (44.1%)</b>	<b>958 (49.8%)</b>	<b>5013 (41.4%)</b>	<b>5144 (40.9%)</b>	<b>5895 (40.8%)</b>
Students	67 (8.2%)	53 (7.0%)	80 (8.4%)	578 (11.5%)	873 (17.0%)	847 (14.4%)
Retired	397 (48.8%)	323 (42.4%)	584 (61%)	1624 (32.4%)	1285 (25.0%)	3075 (52.2%)
Permanently ill	23 (2.8%)	50 (6.6%)	80 (8.4%)	63 (1.3%)	159 (3.1%)	428 (7.3%)
Lone Parent	20 (1.7%)	14 (1.4%)	51 (4.5%)	53 (0.9%)	70 (1.2%)	100 (1.4%)
Lack 1 Amenity	479 (40.6%)	164 (16.9%)	3 (0.3%)	821 (14.2%)	250 (4.2%)	56 (0.8%)
Property Owner Occupied	129 (10.9%)	90 (9.2%)	271 (23.9%)	3656 (63.3%)	4140 (69.8%)	5683 (79.8%)

All information and % taken from Tayside Regional Council Crown Census 1991.  
The bottom three rows in the table relate to Households rather than Individuals.

### **APPENDIX 3: Hardtown semantics and glossary**

The main feature of the Dundee dialect is 'the substitution of the long vowel 'e' for 'i'. This occurs most notably in the first person singular pronoun 'Dorward (1998:5), where 'I' is pronounced 'Eh'. In paraphrasing Dorward (ibid: 5) imagine a Dundee gentleman remarking that 'Eh've been awa fea Dundee that lang ye widnae ken whaur Eh come fae'. The 'distinction between long and short vowels' and 'their idiosyncratic employment; is a more subtle part of the dialect (ibid: 5). Thus words such as 'pauper' and 'popper' would sound the same and 'face' sounds like 'fiss' (ibid: 5). In everyday conversations, 'short vowels are lengthened' and will in that way 'produce the familiar Dundonian drawl', in which, for example, conveying regrets becomes 'Eh'm affy saw-rie'<sup>347</sup> (ibid: 5).

I also found that the short glottal stop or non-sounding 't' was another distinctive trait in Hardtown, turning words like water into wa''er and matter into ma''er, etc. (ibid: 6). It is a charming, laid-back speech pattern, which well reflects the down-to-earth, no nonsense and harsh character of the community's inhabitants.

Most Hardtowners were verbally provocative and cheeky: a style of aggressive, often monosyllabic delivery of expression, typically referred to as *wido*, a term derived from the locally respected 'wide-boy'. The radical nature and history of Dundee society has affected the language and behavioural discourse of all of the community's inhabitants, each of whom feels that they are just as good as the next man or woman and takes *nae nonsense fae nae one*. When particularly aggressive and/or angry, Hardtowners also had a tendency to shorten terms and phrases: for example, instead of using *for god's sake* or *fuck's sake*, my informants would typically use the simple invective *sake*, but delivered with a strong expression of gusto.

<sup>347</sup> A colloquial term for = I'm awfully sorry.

Like most areas, the Hardtown seems to have developed its own vocabulary with regard to the local value systems encountered in the community. This seems to lie somewhat outside the ordinary moral socio-economic denominations, on which the more affluent Dundee communities and their language rest. It is of course another way of limiting and specifying the boundaries of the community and who belong in it. The words and meanings differed slightly between different segments of the community. For instance, the words for drugs and trafficking were very different and depended on the individual's status within the community's hierarchical structure: *drugs, sweets, needs, happy, medicine, candy, score, stuff, blow, uppers, downers, spliffs* etc.

### Glossary

Certain words or endings to sentences were commonly used in Hardtown<sup>348</sup>, including:

<i>About</i>	About
<i>Affy</i>	Awfully, usually in the sense of 'very'
<i>Ain't</i>	Isn't, often used in insults, such as <i>she ain't a' tha!</i>
<i>Antsy</i>	Edgy and irritable, as if the person had 'ants in their pants'.
<i>Arse up</i>	Failing or failure, sometimes modified to ' <i>arse first</i> '
<i>Arsy</i>	Annoying
<i>Awa</i>	Away
<i>Bad mouth</i>	Speak ill of someone or curse excessively
<i>Bairn</i>	Child
<i>Bait</i>	Either a teenage girl ('jail bait') or someone used in a con or sting operation
<i>Bash</i>	Depending on context, verbally or physically beat someone or have sex
<i>Bein'</i>	Being, an example of the simple glottal stop at the end of a word
<i>Be''er</i>	Better, an example of the glottal stop in the middle of a word
<i>Boab</i>	Bob, an old name for a shilling but now 'inflated' to mean a pound
<i>Borrow</i>	Shoplift
<i>Bo'le</i>	Bottle: depending on context, a container of liquids, a useful weapon or nerve
<i>Bo'le ut</i>	Lose nerve due to fear, often used as an accusation or an insult
<i>Bra</i>	Good, well or fine (Scots 'braw')
<i>Buzz</i>	To get high or get elated
<i>'Cept</i>	Except
<i>Chill ut</i>	Depending on context, take it easy or get high on hash
<i>Closie</i>	Alleyway or passage leading to a tenement or high-rise
<i>'Cos</i>	Because
<i>De</i>	The
<i>Di</i>	Depending on context, 'do', 'they' or 'them', examples of vowel shortening
<i>Deed</i>	Died
<i>Di'na</i>	Do not
<i>Dole</i>	Unemployment benefit
<i>Dooin'</i>	Doing, an example of vowel lengthening in the middle with a glottal ending
<i>Druggy</i>	Someone that takes hard drugs like heroin, often with a negative inference
<i>Dun</i>	Down
<i>Eh</i>	Depending on context, 'yes' or 'I'
<i>Eh'm</i>	I am

<sup>348</sup> Some words such as: *about, affy, ain't, awa, bein'* and *be''er* are also used throughout Scotland and are not necessarily unique to Hardtown, although pronunciation differs.

<i>Eh've</i>	I have
<i>Ens</i>	Ones e.g. <i>de bad ens</i>
<i>Es</i>	He is or his
<i>Evil</i>	Tough, hard or good at something, closely linked to the word 'wicked', all of which held highly positive local connotations. However, the same word might also be interpreted as a negative term when used in relation to the government, where evil stood for something I translated as immoral and/or very misguided
<i>Fae</i>	From
<i>Fhew</i>	Few, a good example of vowel modification in the middle of a word
<i>Flush</i>	To have money e.g. <i>eh'm right flush</i>
<i>Find</i>	Shoplift cf. <i>borrow</i>
<i>Gawk</i>	Stare at
<i>Ge'in' fresh</i>	Getting fresh, i.e. being cheeky or 'out of order'
<i>Hard</i>	Tough but also suggesting that the individual is well respected <sup>349</sup>
<i>Hard case</i>	Someone utterly unpredictable and very violent: a <i>nutter</i>
<i>Hardman</i>	Local Hardtown leader, linked to the informal market and criminally affiliated.
<i>Hard-sis</i>	Sister of a Hardman
<i>Hassle</i>	Irritate, harass or bother someone
<i>Hus</i>	House or flat
<i>Havin'</i>	Having
<i>In the ken</i>	In the know, suggesting an awareness of everything going on in the local community
<i>Ken</i>	I know or a simple affirmation of identity, often used at the end of sentences
<i>Kippin'</i>	Sleeping or resting
<i>Knock</i>	Robbery or, paradoxically, a police <i>razzia</i>
<i>Leaches</i>	Affectionate name for e.g. social service staff; see also <i>swine</i>
<i>Like</i>	An affirmation of identity, often used at the end of sentences
<i>Lumpen</i>	Slang word for unskilled temporary workers or 'trash'
<i>Meh</i>	My, another very distinctive Dundee dialect word
<i>Messages</i>	Shopping
<i>Minded</i>	Remembered or thought, e.g. <i>Eh minded tha she</i> = I thought that she
<i>Multis</i>	Multistorey houses or high rises
<i>Nae</i>	Not
<i>No 'hin'</i>	Nothing, a good example of vowel shortening with a glottal ending
<i>Nout</i>	Nothing, none
<i>Ou'ed</i>	Outed, i.e. found out or excluded.
<i>O'her</i>	Other
<i>Poelise</i>	Police
<i>Pus</i>	Face
<i>Pu'in'</i>	Putting, another good example of vowel shortening with a glottal ending
<i>Razzia</i>	Police raid, interestingly from an Arabic word for a hostile raid or <i>knock</i>
<i>Rep</i>	Reputation
<i>Rush</i>	Excitement or 'high'
<i>Schemie</i>	An individual living on a council scheme, (derogatory inference).
<i>Shank</i>	Knife, often home-made
<i>Shankin'</i>	Stabbing, often from the back
<i>Si'n'</i>	Sitting, a very common pastime or excuse
<i>Slag off</i>	Speak ill of or insinuate negative things about someone

<sup>349</sup> The word "hard" is normally pronounced as "ard" in Hardtown but this pronunciation also distinguishes the native-born Hardtowners from incomers, even from adjacent neighbourhoods.

<i>Smarts</i>	Street knowledge
<i>Spare</i>	Depending on context, crazy or something left over, e.g. <i>E'hm goin' spare</i> or <i>E've go' no'in te spare</i>
<i>Sor'ed</i>	Sorted is a colloquial word indicating someone who is well aware of everything or is well regarded in the community
<i>Sor'in ut</i>	Sorting out, taking care of someone, usually as a threat
<i>S'omper</i>	Stomper is a colloquial term for someone who goes to raves or parties, usually <i>pilled up</i> , on a very frequent basis, perhaps two to five times a week. The word is derived from the name of a popular dance, the stomp.
<i>S'reet kenin</i>	Street knowledge or <i>smarts</i> of what is happening in the streets and among the local gangs.
<i>Summin'</i>	Something
<i>Te</i>	To
<i>Teckel</i>	Nice, i.e. to say someone is well <i>teckel</i> = really good looking.
<i>Tha</i>	That
<i>Thon's</i>	That is
<i>Tinkie</i>	Tinker, cf. <i>Schemie</i> . (An interesting word, which was originally applied to the 'travelling people', who used to mend pots and pans with tin, sell handmade clothes pegs, etc. It was also used by people in Angus and Perthshire to identify the seasonal agricultural workers who came to pick berries in the area, many of whom ended up staying in Dundee).
<i>Torch</i>	Set fire to something: particularly applied to a house or flat, often with the occupants still inside
<i>Toun</i>	Town
<i>Turf</i>	A place or part of an area that is seen to belong to or be owned by a faction
<i>Users</i>	People that use/abuse you or people that use drugs
<i>Us</i>	Depending on context, either 'us' or 'me'
<i>Ut</i>	Out
<i>Wanna</i>	Want to
<i>Wa'er</i>	Water
<i>Waste</i>	Negative slang word with many connotations, up to and including killing someone
<i>Wha'fa</i>	What for or why
<i>Whaur</i>	Where
<i>Wi'hout</i>	Without
<i>Wi</i>	With
<i>Wido</i>	Wide-boy or girl, pronounced 'wide-oh': someone who is skilful in face-to-face insolence and bitchy debating.
<i>Wide-boy</i>	A man who is skilful in face-to-face cheeky debating and often also refers to individuals who take part in less than legal schemes (such as selling pirated copies of videos and CDs, stolen cigarettes, etc.). Given the high proportion of women who also take part in these activities, the word is generally shortened to <i>wido</i> .
<i>Widnae</i>	Would not
<i>Wizen</i>	Wise up or wakeup
<i>'Xplainin'</i>	Explaining
<i>Ye</i>	You



Useful Phrases

*Buyin' or bo''lin'?*

*Can ye gi us a sub?*

*Di ye bring a carry out?*

*Di ye ken di weh tae Ninewells?*

*Di ye ken 'im?*

*Eh am a right modern robin o' the hood*

*Eh dinna ha the bottle tae tak di on*

*Eh he got well and truly blowed*

*Eh ken eh was all arse up*

*E's got a wie bit o blow*

*Gi tha in yer gob*

*Gi ut ow ma pus*

*If ye ill 'n, ye start ye pill 'n*

*She'd forget her hid if eh was 'nea naild on*

*She's a waste of space*

*She's ge''in' off her face*

*Tha is fucking 'nackerin'*

*Tha slag was making ut wi him*

*Tha un is a right little madam*

*Thon's a righ' evil fuck!*

*Wa's yer problem?*

*Ye'r s'epin u ow line*

*Ye wanna a taste of meh bo''le*

*Yer makin' a right hash ut a tha*

A phrase often used jokingly to a prospective buyer of stolen goods or sexual partner (subtext - are you up for it?).

Can you lend me some money?

Did you bring something to drink? (It is considered normal to bring a bottle of alcohol to someone's house before going out 'on the town' together).

Where is the local hospital? (subtext - do you want to fight?).

Do you know him? (This phrase is often used to make sure that you know people in the community).

I am a new Robin Hood (i.e. I take from the rich and give to the poor).

I am scared to fight you.

He was completely fooled.

Depending on context, this can mean: I totally failed, I felt totally confused or I drank too much.

He has some cocaine.

Put that in your mouth or eat that.

Get out of my face (subtext - or I'll fight you).

A phrase that is jokingly used to express: if you are in pain or feel unwell take a pill (medicine or drugs).

She would forget her head if it was not attached.

She is useless.

She is getting drunk (or high).

That is totally tiring.

She was carrying on with him.

She is very 'stuck up' (or headstrong).

That is a really impressive or tough person (often used to warn people that someone is very dangerous).

What is your problem? (usually issued as a threat).

You are going against the local rules or norms (yet another invitation to fight).

Depending on context, an offer to share a drink from a bottle or a threat to cut someone with your bottle.

You are creating problems for yourself.

#### **APPENDIX 4: Economically dependent mothers – the ‘bad’ mother**

As many of the informants in my Hardtown sample were officially registered as one-parents and were financially dependent on state benefits, I should like to briefly review their opinions of mainstream political-moral rhetoric which considered that someone choosing to become an economically dependent mother was bad and even without morality<sup>350</sup>.

I propose that we should consider the dichotomised and dualistic contextual notions and representations of the economically dependent mother within the Hardtown in two parts:

1. Parenthood was viewed as an important rite of adulthood and an ascription of internal status, which was cherished by the community, irrespective of whether this involved two parents or just a single parent. I found that the individual and active choice to become an economically dependent mother/father was not contextually viewed as negative or immoral. It seemed instead to conceptualise a positive use of the paths and choices available to these individuals within this socio-economic limited community.
2. However, I did encounter a contextual expression containing a partial or hybridised notion of the ‘bad’ economically dependent mother, even though none of my main informants could actually define or point out any of these ‘bad’ mothers. Most of my informants considered themselves as good mothers and actually felt better about their situation, knowing that, even in their poverty, they were better than this supposedly ‘bad’ mother. The positive contextual notion of the economically dependent mothers seemed to become further locally empowered by the assumed existence of something similar to the state’s notions of ‘those bad mothers’<sup>351</sup>.

I found that some of these marginal individuals did not only oppose the ascription of state notions of morality/immorality but partially and infrequently also opposed some of the internal representations<sup>352</sup> by stating; *Eh am nea one of those single-mum’s, ken* or *We eh nea tha kind of bad single-mum’s, like*. I therefore propose that this local notion partially accepted and ascribed to the state’s right to assert a marginal disempowerment of ‘certain groups of single-mothers’: mothers that they assumed were not as good as they were. In considering their marginal position, I suggest that it is perhaps the empowering sense of creating a group or community of imagined ‘others’, a group of more marginal position than their own, which becomes the local sustenance of this idea<sup>353</sup>.

<sup>350</sup> In Chapter 5, I noted that aspects of the Western (urban) notions and representations of mainstream morality were connected to the participation in a continuous legal employment and some form of work ethic. This ethic presupposes that undeserving (and immoral) individuals are, by definition, destined for poverty and marginality. Consequent state-moral discourse encapsulates that any mother willingly choosing economic dependency rather than work is, hence, immoral. This notion results in the creation of a notion of otherness and stigma that renders the individual as undeserving of support and social benefits.

<sup>351</sup> My informants had a very positive view of their own capabilities as one-parents but allowed that ‘bad’ single-mothers probably existed. As a result, they rejected the state’s notions and representations of the immorality of all dependent single mothers and I found that they instead used the mainstream notions of a ‘bad’ single mother as a locally empowering concept.

<sup>352</sup> The oppositional and dichotomised fragmentations of representations of work, morality and identity within this contextual marginal community also led to a further individual fragmentation.

<sup>353</sup> An idea that was still to a degree based on the otherwise locally rejected state-morality.

### **APPENDIX 5: How does this differ from the state's working-class ethic?**

The moral values and attitudes of any capitalist state are necessarily dependent on the moral, ethical and employment parameters of the mainstream working class ethic. During my fieldwork, I found that everything mainstream opinions and notions represented as a negative manifestation of this work ethic were apparently opposed by my Hardtown informants. At the same time, they embraced, valued and transformed each of these negative representations into contextually positives.

F. Parkin (1982:99) surmised that 'status groups of ethnic provenance (*and I suggest marginality and exclusion*<sup>354</sup>) derive their sense of social honour from sources that are largely independent of (*or perhaps in opposition to*) the formal structure of esteem and deference'. This probably provides them with the latitude to think more highly of themselves than others outside their community but within that society would<sup>355</sup>.

On this basis, I suggest that the Hardtowners contextual notions and representations of morality have resulted from the antithetic position they have taken against the state's notions of all of the moral values, ethics and obligations of the workingman. This standpoint is also distinct in its positive opinion of violence and its representations of identity, which focused on the Hardtowners cherishing their marginality as exclusive rather than becoming the excluded. For example, I found that my Hardtown informants did not consider legal work or workers in a positive light or 'normal': on the contrary, they equated such work with slavery and a lack of flexibility and regarded the workers as stupid cowards.

### **APPENDIX 6: An interpretation of the gender performances of violence**

During my fieldwork, I regularly encountered mixed groups of young males and females from a wide age-range engaged in what was euphemistically referred to as 'street learning'. On this basis, I propose that there is much less gender-segregation in the Hardtown gangs and factions than was suggested in the studies of gang culture by, for example, Suttles (1968), Dunning, Murphy and Williams (1986) and others. From these observations, I also propose that this Hardtown gender-integration began during the formative years<sup>356</sup>, when pre-teenage and teenage youngsters played and interacted together in the street.

When I asked my informants about this gender-integration, most of them agreed that both sexes had played quite happily together in the streets as children and had then progressed through their teenage years and beyond into mixed-sex factions and gangs. Although a few conceded that they had been part of all-male or all-female factions within gangs, none of them

<sup>354</sup> My italics.

<sup>355</sup> Parkin (1982:99) postulated that Weber had considered 'ethnic honour to be a "specific honour of the masses" because it is a source of self-esteem available to every member of the communal group, however humble his rank in the division of labour and the formal status order based upon it'. Parkin also suggested that 'the lowly are thus often inclined to accept the claims for deference made upon them by others of higher standing' (1982:99). As my thesis shows, I found that these 'claims for deference' fell on deaf ears and the Hardtowners *instead* developed their own local morals and values, based on verbal and physical violence, dichotomy and opposition to those of 'higher standing' (ibid:99).

<sup>356</sup> Although almost all Hardtown children obviously spent their very earliest years within the home environment, most were encouraged from an early age to play in the streets with their siblings or others in similar age groups. This resulted in them spending a considerable amount of their time socialising with other children of both sexes, with whom they subsequently grew up and matured into fully-fledged Hardtowners.

considered it unusual or unnatural that mixed-sex factions or gangs should predominate in the Hardtown. Indeed, all expressed a degree of surprise that I dared question the natural social order<sup>357</sup> of life in this predominantly aggressive and violent community.

In most of the local myths and stories that I heard around Diana's table in the GRcc, women were considered to be as violent and strong as the men (cf. Chapter 1 on community politics and Chapter 6 on violence). However, I should like to note that this was not locally imbued with any directly negative connotations. On the contrary, I found that the Hardtown women were expected and could be relied on to take an active part in the daily performance of violence. Indeed, my informants' behaviour, expressions and explanations confirmed that this violence and aggression validated their contextual, local notions of power, value and morality, which were accessible to a considerable degree by both genders. For many Hardtown men and women, both inside and outside the community's gang structure, this violence seems to have become a normal part of their daily lives.

### **APPENDIX 7: Between joking symbolism and verbal violence**

It is interesting to consider the Hardtown trickster or confidence man/woman with the ethnographically widespread tradition of ritualised joking and joking relationships<sup>358</sup>. This is usually characterised by the use of particular language styles, which mix jokes, sarcasm and frivolity, often in a structured manner, and have a certain rapport with or is part of an ongoing exchange with specific categories of people. In many cases, anthropologists have found that these relationships are often connected and defined in accordance with or between affines and kin or even within more extensive categories, such as the whole clan. Some have argued that the juxtaposition of social conjunction and disjunction reflects the nature of the relationships and reveals important aspects of the structure of the society. Others have instead argued that this juxtaposition of diametric opposites represents a 'ritual license or privileged familiarity' (Bauman 1986: 156).

Considering the dark humour underlying many of the fragmented images throughout this thesis, especially in Chapter 6, I would add the suggestion that ritualised joking or joking relationships may, in some cases, transform both functions<sup>359</sup>. The narrative and behaviour of my Hardtown informants offers evidence that the internal joking relationship expresses and represents a certain ritual familiarity between the participants, albeit on a temporary basis for the duration of a specific transaction if the participants are not affiliated with one another. In these cases, I would suggest that the aggressive joking between non-affiliates paradoxically facilitates the avoidance (and/or creation) of conflict in such a temporary relationship<sup>360</sup>.

<sup>357</sup> I have used the term 'natural social order' in this way as my informants most strenuously emphasised that the social-integration of the sexes was locally considered as normal and an important part of growing up.

<sup>358</sup> For example, many ethnographers have recorded the 'trickster' in some African peoples, Australian aborigines etc., (Cf. Radcliffe-Brown, 1952 & 65 and M Shostak, 1990, etc).

<sup>359</sup> The 'trickster' functions paradoxically and dually within a complex and intrinsic social structure. For example, he/she may express avoidance or distance between him/herself and external agencies such as the social services. On the other hand, he/she may simultaneously display or try to display a certain familiarity with the protagonist in either a ritual or non-ritual fashion.

<sup>360</sup> Paradoxically, the internal expressions of joking relationships in the performance of violence may adopt both symmetric and asymmetric forms between hierarchical individuals, the residential units, current factions and networks, of different and similar status, within the Hardtown community. I found that the internal Hardtown dichotomised ironic and symbolic games can express:

1. A certain temporary or permanent everyday ritual familiarity, facilitating internal power, cooperation, relatedness and friendship.



This joking banter is certainly present in the daily performances of verbal violence in the GRcc, where the asymmetrical relationship between the frequenters and the staff provides a never-ending, dichotomised game in which the Hardtown 'trickster' can hone his/her skill.

Within the social context of humour as suggested by, for example, Goody (1977), I would suggest that the irony, sarcasm, laughter and enjoyment, which runs through most of the Hardtown's performances of violence<sup>361</sup>, provides a cathartic experience and an expression of dichotomised pleasure. It also functions as a social ethos: using, creating and controlling conflicts, trading relationships, relatedness and power.

### **APPENDIX 8: Further studies**

During my fieldwork, I carried out a brief investigation of the Magdalena homes, the local asylums for unmarried mothers, as a result of listening to my informants' horrific stories of mistreatment similar to the case cited in Chapter 6 of this thesis. I have been obliged to remove this section completely, as my thesis would have exceeded the word limit. Therefore, I feel that it would be very interesting to develop a more in-depth study of these homes and their influence on the females sent to them<sup>362</sup>. This study should probably be structured in the form of a life-history montage and include details of how the homes and their inhabitants were perceived by the community.

While I was compiling this thesis, I began to consider and write a few chapters on the situation and poverty of locally marginalized communities versus the nation-state. However, limitations on space again obliged me to abandon my ethnographic studies of this interesting power conflict through socio-economic-moral-political processes within the Hardtown and I would welcome the opportunity to develop these ideas further<sup>363</sup>.

I am also interested in taking a closer look at the diverse aspects and processes around the notion of violence as performance-play and a means of identity, friendship, entertainment and communication. I would like to take my work within this field further<sup>364</sup> and see where our anthropological and ethnographical narrative may lead. For example, I would like to consider the interplay between the different factions within Hardtown and their interplay with outside factions.

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2. A paradoxical facility for the avoidance of conflict or specific employment of the games either to create or to avoid a conflict situation in such a relationship.
  3. A joking and ritual acceptance of a relationship, with mainly positive aspects.
  4. Part of an expressive and cathartic experience: of pain, pleasure and a dramatically ritualised process of communal identity.

<sup>361</sup> For example, consider the first three scenes in the fragmented images in Chapter 6.

<sup>362</sup> According to my informants, many of whom had first-hand experience of these homes, the regime was very harsh and condemnatory, and subjected the inmates to verbal, physical, emotional and social violence.

<sup>363</sup> This unpublished work examined the results of local and regional economic and political changes in Hardtown and Dundee in a number of key areas: social knowledge and consciousness; the targeting of economic sanctions and political rhetoric towards already socio-economically disadvantaged and marginalized groups, such as one-parents or the unemployed, as a form of external violence and the response and/or resistance to these sanctions and this rhetoric at the micro level.

<sup>364</sup> Although I have discussed this topic briefly in Chapter 6, the word limitation for my thesis has meant that I have barely scratched the surface of this interesting area.

Leading on from the present thesis, I should like to consider further the more equal gender-integration I found in the Hardtown performances of violence, together with an in-depth study of youth violence. I believe that these phenomena are much more prevalent than Suttles (1968) and Dunning, Murphy and Williams (1986) allowed and would welcome the opportunity to be involved in a multi-sited research project, as I feel that it would be of more benefit to compare Hardtown with another similar violent and socio-economically challenged environment in, say, Canada, Brazil or Australia.

On a more prosaic level, I think that Diana's table in the GRcc would be an interesting place to study the development of a social network of commensality<sup>365</sup> among Hardtowners.

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<sup>365</sup> At first glance, I was unsure if the people around the table were strangers to one another or part or one big (un)happy family. Depending on context, I still feel that they can be viewed as either.

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